THE FOOLS' PENCE AND Other Facts.

By

CHARLES B. TAYLER.

Author of

RECORDS OF A GOOD MANS LIFE

&c.

SAMPSON LOW, SON & CO. 47 LUDGATE HILL

LONDON

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AND OTHER

Narratives of Every-day Life.

BY CHARLES B. TAYLER, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF

"Records of a Good Man's Life," &c.

WITH DESIGNS BY A. H. FORRESTER.

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TO

The Earl of Shaftesbury,

THE ENLIGHTENED AND DEVOTED FRIEND OF ALL CLASSES
OF HIS COUNTRYMEN,

This little Volume is Dedicated,

WITH THE AFFECTIONATE RESPECT OF

The Author.

PREFACE.

It has been well said by Professor Sedgwick,* that "the men of no nation can be maintained in honour and happiness without a recognition of religious principle. Heathens," he adds, "have taught this lesson; and I once heard it affirmed by one of the greatest philosophers of France, who, at the time that he uttered this great moral truth, was himself an unbeliever in the religion of Christ." I am glad to introduce what I wish to say to my reader, with the remarks of one who is not only a man of genius, but of masculine strength of mind, and who is far better—a humble-minded disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ!

If there is one thing that strikes me more than another in many of the members of our legislature, and in some of our popular authors, it is that there is no recognition of religious principle—either of its need or of its importance—in the speeches of the one party, or in the writings of the other.

It is indeed a sad reflection upon a Christian nation that many of its distinguished legislators should be either ignorant of their own religion, or ashamed of it, and that the few brave men who openly declare their holy faith in that adorable

* See Professor Sedgwick's Prefatory Letter to Dr. Livingstone's Cambridge Lectures.

Saviour whose name is above every name, should stand almost alone in our senate; and that they must make up their minds that any distinct avowal of Christian principle, as the only spring and rule of action in the government of their country will be met with the sneer of contempt or the stare of indifference. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path," said the wise man, speaking by the Spirit of God in the word of God; but it is too evident that the Bible is either an unread or an ignored book by them: and what is the consequence—that they come to the consideration of our social evils unfitted, because unfurnished, for the work of amendment; they are skilled in expediences, but they have yet to learn that that which is morally wrong can never be politically right, and that which is both morally and politically right can only be known and done by those in whose words and actions we find the personal and practical acceptance of our religion. "No nation," adds Professor Sedgwick, "can hope for long prosperity which practically denies its Christianity. Such a nation is not an instrument in the hand of God, fit to work out the holy purposes of His providence;" except, we may add, that God can and does work out his will even by his enemies, when it pleases *Him* to do so.

Some of our social evils, intemperance especially, have increased to such an excess, that it is high time for the eyes of the country to be opened, and for the voice of the country to demand the interference of legislative enactments, or, in plain English, for the introduction of new laws on the subject. Not less than sixty millions* of money are spent year by year

* See Dr. Guthrie's "The City, its Sins and Sorrows;" also Lord Shaftesbury's last "Harvest Home Address."

on intoxicating stimulants within the United Kingdom; and, through the direct and indirect effects produced by these stimulants, sixty thousand lives are annually lost. Who would not look with horror upon a heathen nation, where every year sixty thousand human victims were slain and offered in sacrifice to some monstrous idol, set up in the midst of the land? But would the altar, reeking with the gore of its sixty thousand human sacrifices in that land of dark idolatry, be really a more awful spectacle than that of a Christian nation, yielding its annual number of as many victims to the filthy and brutalising sin of drunkenness? Can nothing be done? it may be asked; can the government do nothing? No—the government cannot interfere: it is deemed expedient to wink at this frightful state of things, because the sum paid into the public treasury is one that cannot be dispensed with. The revenue is so much enriched by the sale of intoxicating drinks that the evil must be allowed to continue. Miserable and short-sighted policy to suppose that it can be for the benefit of any nation to enrich its treasury by corrupting the morals and destroying the souls of its inhabitants!

Surely the time must come when our legislators will be compelled to overcome this monstrous and disgraceful evil, by the most determined energies of government, and when the plain strong sense of the country will refuse to be hoodwinked any longer by the sophistries of an unsound political economy. If in a family, or tribe, under the government of its Patriarch—as that of Abraham in old times, or of some Arab chieftain in the present day—one of the tribe had set up a tent on the outskirts of the camp for the sale of some pernicious drug, pleasant and intoxicating to the senses but fatal to the strength and even life of man; if it was so greedily

swallowed, that the treasure of the tribe was greatly increased by its sale, but its baneful effects were seen in the ghastly spectacle of strong men stalking about the camp like spectres and dying in their prime—would the Patriarch deem that treasure a benefit to his tribe? would he not forbid at once the sale of that fatal drug?

With regard to the popular authors to whom I allude, some of them are men of superior intellect and brilliant imaginations, and keen and close observers of human nature. They manage in their entertaining volumes to make out what must seem to most of their readers a very likely statement, or, as a lawyer would say, a very good case; but, notwithstanding their skilful delineations of character, and the consummate cleverness of their compositions,—they do not give the true account of things as they are; there is that which looks like truth, and much that is true to human nature, but very little that is true to fact, and it is rather a caricature than a true portrait, that is presented to the reader. Sometimes scenes are depicted of abject want and squalid misery, when the sufferers are represented as sullen and defiant under a system of injustice and oppression from which it seems hopeless for them to attempt deliverance. Here again there is no recognition of religious principle; evils are exposed, wrongs are set forth with much power of description; but the only remedy is either not known, or not acknowledged. These authors are like men tearing open the wounds of their fellow men, and leaving them exposed, and uncovered, for there is no attempt to pour in the healing balm, or apply the comforting bandage; nay, there is too often the unkind and bitter taunt at those who do point out, and apply the remedy which the Lord God has provided for the sin and misery of his creatures. I remember

one of those descriptions in a work which I had heard highly commended. I closed the book with a feeling of impatient indignation, saying to myself, 'Is this fair? is it right?' and if this book (now published in a cheap form) should fall into the hands of any of that class, what can it do but exasperate?

How different is the spirit of such a writer as the author of 'English Hearts and English Hands,' where there is no writing for effect, but where the effect produced is of the best and most wholesome character, and calculated to do good to every class of readers!

As to the narratives now offered to the reader, they are a collection of some of the tracts which I have published at various times; an especial blessing has been graciously given to some of them, and they have had a wide circulation both at home and abroad.* They are the fruits of a close observation, and an intimate acquaintance with the classes which I have endeavoured to depict. Most of them are true, both as to the incidents related and as to the characters brought forward. What I have seen and known during nearly forty years of my past life has enabled me to obtain much information, and to speak from my own experience. I have deemed it my privilege to be much associated with my fellow-countrymen in the humbler ranks of life, and to be looked upon by them as their friend; and many friendships have I formed among them—unions, I trust, which death itself may suspend, but will not destroy. I am only speaking the simple truth when I affirm, that some of the noblest and brightest examples of godly principle and lovely and consistent practice, purity of morals and true delicacy of feeling, I have met with among my poorer brethren in the towns and villages of England.

* The number issued in America of "The Fools' Pence" alone, I learn from the "American Tract Society," has been 800,000.

Heartily do I agree with the late admirable Dr. Chalmers, when he speaks of "the charm of intercourse with a Christian among the poor," with "one whose chief attainment is that he knows the Bible to be true, and feels it to be precious. . . He lives in a cottage, and yet he is a king and priest unto God. He is fixed for life to the drudgery of a workman, and yet is on the full march to a blissful immortality. The preaching of the cross, which is foolishness to others, he feels to be the wisdom of God and the power of God. That faithfulness which is inseparable to the promises of the gospel—that righteousness which is unto the believer—that fulness in Christ out of which the supplies of light and of strength are ever made to descend on the prayers of all who put their trust in Him—that wisdom of principle and wisdom of application, by which, through his spiritual insight into his Bible, he is enabled both to keep his heart and to guide his life—these are his treasures. He is rich, just because the word of Christ dwells in him richly in all wisdom. He is great, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon him."

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THE FOOLS' PENCE.

'There is a treasure to be desired in the house of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.'—PROV. xxi. 20.

MUCH is often said about the distress of the poorer classes, and there can be no doubt that a fearful amount of poverty and distress is often to be found among them. The man who can witness, or even hear of the suffering of another man, and make no attempt to relieve it, must have indeed a cold, unfeeling heart, unmoved either by love to God or to his neighbour. I wish to point out one cause of the wretched poverty abounding, especially in our larger towns. It is to be found in the system of Transmutation. Though TRANSMUTATION is a long word, and to some readers may seem a hard word, I have chosen it because it exactly expresses my meaning; and when the meaning of the term is given in a few words of good, common English, it will soon appear to

have little or no difficulty about it. Transmutation means the change of a thing into another nature or substance. If silver could be converted, or turned into gold, or iron into copper, the change would be called, as the famous Bacon has said, 'for distinction's sake, Transmutation.'

The poor man gives his honest, hard labour in exchange for the rich man's money. This is an equitable, or fair exchange, in which each receives benefit. Now, these earnings of the poor man are his own: that is agreed upon. The next consideration is, What is to be done with these earnings? Let us suppose a man to earn thirteen shillings a week, and to have a wife and three children. He brings his money to his wife, who lays it out to the best advantage, adding to it any little gained by herself and her children during the week. With this sum, nay, with a smaller sum, if the wife is a good manager, want has been kept from the door. But, suppose twelve shillings and tenpence of the week's wages are made to go through the process of Transmutation, and the remaining twopence is brought to the wife to be the sole support of the family; (I have known such a sum to be brought home by a husband who earned thirteen shillings a week;) suppose such a sum to be brought home as the whole amount of the week's earnings. Upon whom, I ask, should the blame be laid? upon those who manage public affairs, or upon the father of the family?

Have you ever seen a London gin-shop? Not many years ago, a gin-shop was a mean-looking, and by no means a spacious place, with a few small bottles, not bigger than a doctor's largest vial, in the dusty window. But the small, dark gin-shop of former times has now become a palace. However poor many of the working classes may be, it seems to be their pleasure to squander the little money they have upon these gin-palaces, as if they were determined that the

persons whom they employ to sell the poison to them should dwell in the midst of luxury and splendour. I do not mean to say that we have a right to throw all the blame upon the master or the mistress of a gin-shop. The keeper of the gin-palace may say he does not *force* any man to drink; but neither does the devil *force* any man to sin. He tempts, he cannot force. By temptation he overcomes. The keeper of the gin-palace does the same; and he satisfies his conscience with the miserable excuse, that if *he* does not sell the liquid poison, some other person will. But, for my part, I should not like to keep one, and to get rich upon the money of the poor infatuated creatures who ruin both soul and body in gin-drinking. The story of 'The Fools' Pence' which follows is worth attending to; it is a fact.

A little, sharp-featured, meanly-dressed man stood talking to Mrs. Crowder, the mistress of the gin-palace in F— street.

'Why, Mrs. Crowder,' said he, 'I should hardly know you again. Really I must say you have things in the first style. What a splendid paper! what superb curtains! what elegant chairs; what a pair of fire-screens! all so bright and so fresh; and yourself so well, ma'am, and looking so well.'

Mrs. Crowder had dropped languidly into an arm chair, and sat sighing and smiling with affectation, not turning a deaf ear to her visitor, but taking in, with her eyes, a full view of what passed in the shop, having drawn aside the curtain of rose-coloured silk which sometimes covered the window between the shop and the parlour.

'Why, you see, Mr. Berriman,' she replied, 'our business is a thriving one, and we don't love to neglect it, for one must work hard for an honest livelihood; and then, you see, my two girls, Letitia and Jemima, were about to leave their boarding-school; so Mr. Crowder and I wished to make the

old place as genteel and fashionable as we could; and what with new stone copings to the windows, and new French window-frames to the first floor, and a little paint, and a little papering, and a little gilding, Mr. Berriman, we begin to look tolerable. I must say, too, Mr. Crowder has laid out a deal of money in fitting up the shop, and in filling his cellars.'

'Well, ma'am,' continued Mr. Berriman, 'I don't know where you find the needful for all these improvements. For my part, I can only say, our trade seems quite at a stand-still. There's my wife always begging for money to pay for this or that little necessary article; but I part from every penny with a pang. Dear Mrs. Crowder, how do you manage?'

Mrs. Crowder simpered; and raising her eyes, and looking with a side glance of smiling contempt towards the crowd of customers in the shop:

'The fools' pence! 'tis THE FOOLS' PENCE that does it for us!' she said.

Perhaps it was owing to the door being just then opened, and left ajar, by Miss Jemima, who had been serving in the bar, that the words of Mrs. Crowder were heard by a customer, named George Manly, who stood at the upper end of the counter. He turned his eyes upon the people who were standing near him, and saw pale, sunken cheeks, inflamed eyes, and ragged garments. He turned them upon the stately apartment in which they were assembled: he saw that it had been fitted up at no trifling cost: he stared through the partly open doorway into the parlour, and saw looking-glasses, and pictures, and gilding, and fine furniture, and a rich carpet, and Miss Letitia in a silk gown, sitting down to her piano-forte: and he thought within himself, How strange it is! by what a curious process it is, that all this wretchedness on my left hand is made to turn into all that finery and splendour on my right!

'Well, sir, and what's for you?'

The words were spoken in the same shrill voice which had made 'the fools' pence' ring in his ears.

George Manly was still deep in thought, and with the end of his rule (for he was a carpenter) he had been making a calculation, drawing the figures in the little puddles of gin upon the counter. He looked up, and saw Mrs. Crowder herself, as gay as her daughters, her portly form decked out with silks and ribands, and a lace cap, and artificial roses at the back of her head, and bracelets upon her fat round arms, and rings upon her fingers.

'Well, sir,' she repeated, 'what's for you?'

'A pint of ale, ma'am, is what I'm waiting for to-night' (no more spirits, he thought, within himself, will I touch); and then, as he put down the money for the ale, he looked her calmly in the face, and said, 'There are the fools' pence, and the last fools' pence I intend to pay down for many a long day.'

George Manly hastened home. His wife and his two little girls were sitting at work. They were thin and pale, alas! from want of food. The room looked very cheerless, and the fire was so small that its warmth was scarcely felt; yet the commonest observer must have been struck by the neatness and cleanliness of the apartment, and everything about it.

'This is indeed a treat, girls, to have dear father home so soon to-night,' said his gentle wife, and she looked up at George as he stood before the table, turning his eyes first upon one and then another of the little party; then throwing himself into his large arm-chair, and lying back, and smiling, he said:—

'Well, Bessy and Sally, are you not glad to see me? May not those busy little fingers stop a moment, just while you

jump up, and throw your arms about father's neck, and kiss him?'

'Oh yes, we have time for that,' said one of the girls, as they both sprang up to kiss their father; 'but we have no time to lose, dear father,' said Sally, pressing her cheek to his, and speaking in a kind of coaxing whisper close to his ear, 'for these shirts are the last of the dozen we have been making for Mr. Farley, in the next street.'

'And as no work can be done to-morrow,' added Bessy, gravely, who stood with her little hand in her father's, 'we are all working as hard as we can, for mother has promised to take them home on Monday afternoon.'

'Either your eyes are very weak to-night, Susan,' said George to his wife, 'or you have been crying. I'm afraid you work too hard by candle-light.'

Susan smiled, and said, 'Working does not hurt my eyes;' and as she spoke, she turned her head, and beckoned with her finger to her little boy.

'Why, John, what's this that I see?' said his father,—'What, you in the corner? Come out, as mother beckons for you; but come and tell me what you have been doing.'

'Nay, never mind it, dear husband; John will be very good, I hope; and we had better say no more about what is past.'

'Yes, but I must know,' said he, drawing John close to him. 'Come, tell me what has been the matter.'

John was a plain-spoken boy, and had a straightforward way of speaking the truth. He came up to his father, looked full in his face, and said, 'The baker came for his money to-night, and would not leave the loaf without mother paid for it; and though he was cross and rough to mother, he said it was not her fault, and that he was sure you had been drinking away all the money; and when he was gone, mother cried

over her work, but she did not say anything. I did not know she was crying, till I saw her tears fall, drop, drop, on her hands; and then I said bad words, and mother sent me to stand in the corner.'

'And now, John, you may bring me some coals,' said Susan, 'there's a fine lump in the coal-box.'

'But first tell me what your bad words were, John,' said his father; 'not swearing, I hope.'

'No,' said John—colouring, but speaking as bluntly as before—'I said that you were a bad man: I said, Bad father.'

'And they were bad words, I am sure,' said Susan, very calmly; 'but you are very sorry, and you are forgiven, and so you may get me the coals.'

George looked at the face of his wife, and as he met the tender gaze of her mild eyes, now turned to him, he felt the tears come into his own. He rose up; and as he put the money into his wife's hand, he said, 'There are my week's wages, dear mother. Come, come, hold out both hands, for you have not got all yet. Well, now you have every farthing, except a few pence, and they were fools' pence, that I paid for a pint of ale to-night. Keep the whole, and lay it out to the best advantage, as you always do. I hope this will be a beginning of better doings on my part, and happier days on yours;—and now put on your bonnet, and I'll walk with you to pay the baker, and buy a bushel or two of coals, or anything else you may be in want of; and when we come back, I'll read a chapter of the Bible to you and the girls, while you get on with the needlework.'

Susan went up stairs to put on her bonnet and shawl, and she remained a little longer to kneel down on the spot where she had often knelt almost heart-broken in prayer,—prayer that her heavenly Father would turn her husband's heart first

to his Saviour, and then to his wife and children; and that, in the mean time, he would give her more faith and more patience. She knelt down this time to pour out her heart in thanksgiving and praise. The pleasant tones of her husband's voice called her from her knees.

After the children were gone to bed, George Manly told his wife all that had been passing in his mind. He had seen, he said, what the pence of the poor could do towards keeping up a fine house and dressing out the landlord's wife and daughters, and he had been struck with sorrow and with shame when he thought of his own hard-working, uncomplaining Susan, and his children in want and almost in rags, while he was sitting drinking, and drinking, night after night, more like a beast than a man, destroying his own manly strength, and the fine health God had given him; and he hoped that he had come to himself at last. He made his determination from that hour; and, as he made it not in the confidence of his own strength, but in humble dependence upon Him from whom 'all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed,' the resolution which he made, he kept.

It was more than a year after Mrs. Crowder, of the gin-palace in F— street, had first missed a regular customer from her house, and had forgotten to express her wonder as to what could have become of the tall, good-looking carpenter, who generally spent his earnings there, and drank and spent his money so freely.

'There, get on as fast as you can, dears; run, girls, and don't stop for me; your beautiful dresses will be quite spoiled: never mind me, for mine is a French silk, and won't spot.'

These words were screamed out as loudly as her haste would permit her by Mrs. Crowder, who was accompanying her daughters, on Sunday evening, to the C—— tea-gardens.

She was answered by Miss Jemima, 'You know, ma', we can't run, for our shoes are so tight.'

'Then turn into one of these houses, dear,' said the mother, who was bustling forward as fast as she could.

'No, indeed,' replied the other daughter, who found time to curl her lip with disdain, notwithstanding her haste and her distress, 'I'll not set a foot in such filthy hovels.'

'Well, dears, here is a comfortable, tidy place,' cried the mother at length, as they hastened forward; 'here I'll stop, nor will I budge till the rain is over: come in, Jemima; come in, Letitia; you might eat off these boards, they're so clean.'

The rain was now coming down in torrents, and the two young ladies gladly followed their mother's example, and entered the neat and cleanly dwelling. Their long hair hung dangling about their ears; their pink crape bonnets had been screened in vain by their fringed parasols, and the flounces of their silk gowns were draggled with mud. They all three began to stamp upon the floor of the room into which they had entered, with very little ceremony; but the good-natured mistress of the house felt more for their disaster than for her floor, and came forward at once to console and assist them. She brought forth some clean cloths from the dresser drawer, and she and her two daughters set to work to wipe off, with quick and delicate care, the rain-drops and mud-splashes from the silk dresses of the three fine ladies. The bonnets and the parasols were carefully dried at a safe distance from the fire, and a comb was offered to arrange the uncurled hair; such a white and clean comb as may seldom be seen on a poor woman's table—we doubt even if the Miss Crowders' combs were so clean.

When all had been done that could be done, as Miss Jemima said, and 'they began to look themselves again,' Mrs. Crowder, who was lolling back at her ease in a large and comfortable

arm-chair, and amusing herself by taking a good stare at everything and everyone in the room, suddenly started forward, and cried out, addressing herself to the master of the house, upon whose Bible and at whose face she had been last fixing her stare—'Why, my good man, we are old friends; I know your face, I'm certain; still there is some change about you, though I cannot exactly say what it is.'

'I used to be in ragged clothes, and out of health,' said George Manly, smiling, as he looked up from his Bible; 'I am now, blessed be God for it, comfortably clad, and in excellent health.'

'But how is it,' said Mrs. Crowder, 'that we never catch a sight of you now?'

'Madam,' said he, 'I'm sure I wish well to you, and all people; nay, I have reason to thank you in particular, for some words of yours were the first means of opening my eyes to my own foolish and sinful course. You seem to thrive, so do we. Only this time last year my wife and children were half-naked and half-starved. Look at them, if you please, now; for so far as sweet, contented looks go, and decent raiment befitting their station, I'll match them with any man's wife and children in all England. And now, madam, I tell you, as you told a friend of yours one day last year, that it is the FOOLS' PENCE which have done all this for us. The fools' pence! —I ought rather to say, the pence earned by honest industry, and spent in such a manner that I can now ask the blessing of God upon it all.'

When Mrs. Crowder and her daughters were gone, George Manly sat without speaking for some considerable time. He was deep in thought, and his gentle, pious wife felt that she knew on what subject he had been thinking so deeply: for when he awoke from his fit of thought, a deep sigh stole from his lips, and he brushed away the tears which had filled his eyes.

'Susan,' he said, 'what can I render unto the Lord for all his goodness to me? From what a fearful depth of ungodliness and danger I have been snatched! I have been considering within myself that my turning away from sin which did most easily beset me was not of myself, it was from the Lord—from him, owing to those mercies, I was not consumed—from him whose compassion never fails. You reminded me from the first that I could do nothing in my own strength, and I agreed to what you said. I thought I felt the truth of what you said then by my own experience; but, on looking back to that time, and putting what I then felt over against that which I now feel, it seems to me that I was then like the man whose eyes had received but their first anointing from the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who answered, 'I see men as trees, walking.' But he leadeth the blind by a way which they know not, and he does even more for them: he opens the eyes of the blind, that they may see the light of life. Dear Susan, what I have had to go through a time or two, from temptation, nobody but the Lord can tell.

'Once I met some of my old companions, and they all set upon me in such a way, to draw me to drink with them, that I afterwards thought that Satan must have urged them on, for how could my drinking profit them?

'Another time, when I was deep in thought about a job of work that I had to do the next day, I went walking on, and found myself at the door of the poison-shop, without knowing how I got there; but this was very long ago, and greatly owing to the old, bad habit which had grown upon me. I had strength given me, however, to turn away, though the door opened just as I reached it, and I saw a man tossing off a glass of gin at the counter; and at the sight I felt a sudden sinking within me, and a craving for the poison, as if I really needed it. I turned away, feeling myself little better than some poor

hack horse, who stops at the ale-houses on the road, where his master has been in the habit of calling. Surely I was thus led by the law of sin in my members—by that part of me in which the lust of the flesh had still such power.

'But Susan, I was thinking, just as that showy dame came in, when my eyes were fixed upon this holy book, and I trust my heart and soul were reading through my eyes, I was thinking of these words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* I believe that the Lord has been pleased to put a new spirit within me, a new heart, which has been struggling and fighting to drive out and away my old bad appetites. I hate that which I once loved; and when the bad and old part of me pulls and drags me back to my sin, I loathe it. I feel like one that has been taken from a swine-trough, to eat and drink at the table of a king, and, having tasted higher and sweeter fare, I cannot go back again to the husks and to the mire. This surely is of the Lord; for though, when I first turned from my sin, it seemed to me that it was I who made the choice, I who sprang forward to obey the call written in this book, "Choose life;" I look back with wonder and with trembling thankfulness, and I confess that it was not I that chose the Lord, but the Lord that hath chosen me—the Lord that first loved me. Ah, what a love is the love of Christ! He gave his own blood as our precious ransom: and blessed be God, he came to save us from our sins, to destroy in us the work of the devil, to put a new spirit within us, and thus to prove to us, and in us, the truth of those very words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."'

* 2 Corinthians v. 17.

THE LORD'S DAY;

OR,

KATHARINE.—PART I.

'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.'—EXOD. xx. 8.

'This is the day when Christ arose
So early from the dead;
Why should I still my eyelids close,
And waste my hours in bed?'

THE voice which was singing was as sweet and joyous as that of the lark, and its song of praise went up when the fresh airs of morning were blowing, and the golden sunbeams of morning were shining into the little chamber of the singer; but no sooner was the verse concluded, than another youthful voice burst forth as joyously and as sweetly in the second verse of the same hymn:—

'This is the day when Jesus broke
The power of death and hell;
And shall I still wear Satan's yoke,
And love my sins so well?'

There was a pause, and then a third voice of a peculiar character was heard from an adjoin-

ing chamber; it was as sweet as either of those which had already been heard, but its deep and touching plaintiveness went to the heart, and gave a new character to the singing very different from the bird-like tone of the other two: it was the melody of the heart, and was the singing of one that felt that the hymn was sung with reverence unto God:—

'To-day with pleasure Christians meet
To pray and hear thy word,
And I would go with cheerful feet
To learn thy will, O Lord.'

And then every voice joined in one cheerful chorus, singing all together the last verse:—

'We'll leave our sport to read and pray,
And so prepare for heaven;
Oh may we love this sacred day
The best of all the seven!'

They were all children's voices, though one was scarcely to be called a child; and yet she was so childlike in her appearance, so humble and simple in all her ways, that it was evident to all who saw her, that whatever her age might be, she had not yet been awakened by the world to any of those selfish or affected feelings which so often spoil the happy unconsciousness of childhood. There was about Katharine neither look nor manner which told the observer that she was thinking what others might say of her, or what their opinion concerning her might be. The thoughtful Christian would have said of her, and said with truth, Here is a child of God, one who has been made so by adoption and grace, and who has sweetly learned to look up to God at all times, as to her heavenly Father, for direction, help, and blessing from Him. Katharine was the child of parents who trained her aright; she was their eldest child, and though young in years, she was the friend and companion of her pious mother.

It was Sunday morning, and as it was the habit among these children that the one who first awoke should send up at once a hymn of morning praise to God, and that the next awakened should take up the strain, the house was often ringing with the glad songs of these happy children, and the influence of their sweet cheerfulness seemed to spread over every member of the family; for even the little baby, when she heard the children singing, would clap her hands and crow with delight; and Lizzy, the stout servant girl, might be heard singing in the lower part of the house some cheerful hymn of praise.

There is no cheerfulness like that which takes its spring from hearts which are made joyful on God's holy day, and in His house of prayer. Those who have an experimental acquaintance with religion know this. They realize the truth of that promise, 'Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord,' Isa. lviii. 14. They have been brought to know that the service of the Lord is perfect freedom; not that they or any creatures still in the body have yet come to the full enjoyment of that freedom, but they drink in its freshening air through the prison bars of their earthly tabernacle; and they are gradually preparing, and being prepared, for that blissful hour, even for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body, for which they wait. And the means by which they are brought to this state is by their being enabled to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words; for they apply this Scripture, not only to the earthly sabbath, (and to that they do most strictly apply it,) but they extend the application to that eternal rest of heavenly glory of which the earthly sabbath is but a faint though lovely type. Oh that all who name the name of Christ would think more on this subject! It is sad to perceive how the true nature of

sabbath rest and the cheerfulness of the Lord's day, is misunderstood even by those who wish to keep that day holy; and as for those who have no wish to do so, they judge the sweet services of that day to be little else than weariness and miserable bondage, 'speaking evil of the things that they understand not,' and 'turning from the holy commandment delivered unto them.'

The Lord's day below is given us as a season of peculiar preparation for the Lord's kingdom above; and who is there that needs not a preparation for that eternal kingdom? What a calm and pleasant season was the Lord's day in the family of Henry Grey! He was a small shopkeeper in the town of ——, and carried on a flourishing and profitable business. Saturday was anything but a time of leisure to him and his wife. It was the busiest day of the week, and their shop was usually thronged with customers, but the household work of the Sunday was invariably done on the Saturday; nothing that could be done on the previous day was left for the Lord's day, which, when it arrived, was truly a time of rest, sacred to the Lord of the sabbath. The happiness of a man does not depend on the circumstances by which he may be surrounded: one man with a guilty conscience, and a sullen, murmuring spirit, would be miserable in a palace; while another with a clear, peaceful conscience, would be happy in a dungeon. Our chief care, therefore, should be as to the state of our hearts within—for the heart is the man—rather than as to the outward circumstances around us.

'Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds heaven-born and lowly take
That for a hermitage.'

I would apply this to the question of the Lord's day. There must be a sense of that which really makes the enjoyment of

the Lord's day if it is to be a season of enjoyment; there must be the sabbath spirit in the heart, if there is to be the sabbath joy in the day; for the mere fact of a man having a day of rest will not make him rejoice in a day of rest; but let him have both the sabbath spirit and the sabbath rest, and then its hours will indeed make a season of most blessed rest to him.

He must also clearly understand in his mind, and feel deeply in his heart, the nature and the blessedness of this rest as an earthly rest, or rather as a heavenly rest on earth, or he will never understand or value the blessedness of heaven; for heaven is not only a place, it is a state; and he in whom it is not as a state here, would never enjoy it were he to be permitted to enter into it as a place hereafter. Therefore we may imagine to ourselves the Lord of the sabbath saying to us with reference to His day, 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?' John iii. 12. How shall ye believe in the glorious happiness of heaven above, which is spiritual, and holy, even the eternal presence of the Lord, if when I tell you of sabbath peace on earth ye do not believe my words, and are utter strangers to such peace?

After all, this is one of the best arguments for the necessity of observing the sabbath rest on earth, that it is the type and shadow of the eternal sabbath above; and as no type can be laid aside or discontinued till it has been fulfilled by its antitype, so the Lord's day must be binding upon us as of perpetual observance till earth shall be no more, and the rest that remaineth for the people of God is revealed, and the pilgrims of the cross go up to that better country, even the heavenly.

But this is not, neither indeed can be, the work of nature; it is the work of grace, the triumph of faith: and in order to

any work of grace, there must be the denial of self, even of the natural man, nay, of 'that infection of nature which doth remain even in them that are regenerated'—that selfishness, which, like the Canaanite in the land, is but gradually driven out by the daily death of the cross. 'If any love me,' said our blessed Lord, 'let him follow me; and if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' Matt. xvi. 24. This must be the study and the practice of the citizen of the heavenly rest, on the Lord's day; and therefore the evangelical prophet Isaiah, speaking under the inspiration of God the Spirit, has said, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'

To a spirit thus exercised in the holy experiences of the Divine life, how inexpressibly soothing is the sweet rest of the Lord's day! It is to him the green oasis, the little grassy meadow in the wilderness, where, after the week-day's journey, the pilgrim halts for refreshment and repose; where he rests beneath the shade of the lofty palm trees, and dips his vessel in the waters of the calm, clear stream, and recovers his strength to go forth again upon his pilgrimage in the desert with renewed vigour and cheerfulness.

There were but two in the family of the Greys who could be said thus to realize the holy blessedness of the Lord's day, who could call the sabbath a delight, not merely because it was a day of rest among the working-days of the week, but because it was the type of their eternal inheritance; and

these two were the mother of the family, and her sweet and modest child Katharine.

There was much of promise, and much that was good in her husband, but, alas! too much that was unstable and inconsistent. The energy of his wife's character was the moving spring of the household; and the influence which she exercised over his mind and actions, while it was so gentle that he scarcely suspected it, was so pervading and so powerful that it made him, in fact, appear in the eyes of others almost as decided a disciple of Christ as herself. And yet she was too unaffectedly humble to have any design of ruling him, 'being guided to a behaviour in all things becoming holy humility by the vigour of a lowly spirit within her.'* There was no show of humility in her speech and behaviour; but that sweet humble air and mien which proved that she had so learned Christ as those who pass the chief of their time in his company, and lose no opportunity which may offer to sit at his feet, and to hear his word. She was only a humble shopkeeper's wife; yet she was a bright example of what can be done by those who adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in the sphere where he has placed them, and 'shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life,' and giving light to all around them.

Everything had its appointed hour in this household; and on the Lord's day, the morning hours were so arranged that, while due time was given to family devotion and to breakfast, still by nine o'clock every one was ready for the peculiar duties of the day. The house in which they resided was an old, and, in some respects, an inconvenient residence, though spacious and airy. It was in one of the back streets of the ancient county town of ——; but the garden behind it was one of singular beauty, though laid out in a formal, old-

* Jonathan Edwards "On the Affections."

fashioned style. Its broad gravel walks and grassy slopes, its beds of flowers and thick hedge-rows of old clipped evergreens, made it a favourite spot with all the family; and in the summer time, as it was entirely shut out from public gaze, the parents and their children were accustomed to pass many of the quiet hours of the Lord's day there, under the shade of the old mulberry-tree near the house, or in a large and pleasant arbour at the bottom of the garden. This arbour commanded a view of soft, green meadows, and the winding river with a hanging wood upon its opposite bank, as well as of the avenue of trees which led to the church, whose venerable walls and lofty tower were partly hidden by their spreading foliage. Often and often in after years, when far away from her family, Katharine would sit half lost in thought at her chamber window at Thornburn, recalling the pleasant hours she had spent in the garden at ——, where her mother on the sabbath morning used to assemble her and her brothers, and read to them some of the beautiful stories of the Holy Bible, or teach them, in her own delightful way, some short lesson of scripture doctrine or precept, and then question them to find out whether they had learned their sacred lesson, often telling them that such was the way of our blessed Lord with his disciples, for that after teaching them one of his Divine lessons, he would ask the question, 'Have ye understood all these things?' Matt. xiii. 51; and she would add, that he also said, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,' John xiii. 17.

'Observe, dear children,' she would say, 'our Lord did not tell them that they were wise or good, though they would be both if they obeyed him; but he said, *Happy* are ye if ye do them; and it is quite true,' she added; 'the Psalmist knew this; and he spoke the words of truth and soberness when he said, "Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:

I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved; thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." ' Psa. cxix. 40, 47, 54.

From their breakfast-table on the day of rest they would seek this pleasant garden, when the sun had sometimes scarcely drunk up the pearly dew upon the lawn: and again, after morning service, they would be sure to find some cool and shady spot, which tempted them to leave the house as soon as their frugal dinner was over; and again in the evening there was the walk near the summer-house, where a fresh breeze was generally blowing, cooled by the river and the deep green meadows which it watered.

The day on which our narrative commences was one of peculiar interest to the family of the Greys, for on that sabbath Katharine and her cousin Elizabeth were to go up to the Lord's table, and receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper for the first time. Katharine had passed a full hour that morning alone with her mother, and the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper had been the subject of their conversation and their prayers. Many of the hours of the sabbath were with Mrs. Grey hours of retirement and self-examination and prayer, some with her family, some quite alone. She was anxious that her pious Katharine should be gently trained to delight in the same habit. She did so; it was Katharine's habit even to the end of her sojourn on earth.

We have said nothing as yet of Elizabeth Grey. Her mother was sister to Katharine's mother, and her father brother to Katharine's father, and Elizabeth was their only child. The two girls were nearly of an age, and much attached to one another; they were both dutiful children to their parents, and much alike in tastes and habits: nay, even in person there was a striking resemblance in the one to the other. What, however, was of real import-

ance as to likeness, there could be little doubt that they were both the children of God by grace and adoption, both united to the mystical Vine, Jesus Christ, as living and fruitful branches, and heirs together, through him, of the same glorious inheritance.

'You are later than usual,' was the salutation of Mrs. Grey to her sister, as the latter, with her husband and Elizabeth, walked into the room.

'We are indeed, but the morning is very hot, and we walked slowly down the sandy lane. I am not quite easy about Elizabeth; I fear she walked too far yesterday; we were, as you know, taking leave at good Mrs. Grant's at Birchgreen, and we did not like to take out the mare, for William thought she had hardly recovered from her lameness.'

'And what is it you do not like in her looks, dear mother?' said Mr. Grey, fondly patting his daughter's cheek; 'for my part, I never saw Elizabeth look so well; she has a better colour than usual, and I am sure her eyes do not look like those of a sick person.'

'It is that very brightness,' said Mrs. Grey, gravely, 'which makes me uneasy; Elizabeth looks too well.'

'Strange, indeed,' said her husband, laughing; 'I do not quite understand how that could be possible.'

'I understand what Margaret means,' said her aunt, 'though I, too, think Elizabeth looks unusually well; but let the dear child speak for herself.'

Elizabeth smiled when she was questioned, and told them all that she felt well and strong; and the anxious mother appeared to be satisfied, and looked no longer grave and uneasy. Together they went into the garden, and sat down on the low benches beneath the mulberry-tree, and there Katharine read aloud the affecting account of the last evening of our Lord with his disciples, and of the institution of the sacrament of the

Lord's supper on that mournful night. Then the whole party sang together one of those hymns which are so well suited to the subject; and in this frame, subdued and thoughtful, and full of humble, heartfelt gratitude for the inestimable love and astonishing sacrifice made for them by the King and Lord of glory, when he submitted to shame and sorrow and mortal suffering for their sake, the little party quietly proceeded to the house of God. It was indeed a touching sight when Katharine and Elizabeth approached together the table of the Lord, and received in adoring faith the sign and seal of the communion of the body and of the blood of Jesus Christ, and were thus admitted on the Lord's day to be partakers of the Lord's supper.

'You will not return to the farm between services to-day,' were the words on the lips not only of Katharine, but of her father and mother. 'You will all go home with us.'

Elizabeth's mother looked at her, and then said, 'If Elizabeth feels well we had perhaps better return, as we have to send their dinner to some of our old neighbours, and as Elizabeth and I have our little class to teach; but on second thoughts, if Elizabeth likes to stay, we will leave her behind.'

'I should like to stay, and I would like to go,' said Elizabeth; but she felt that she could be more useful with her mother, and she accordingly went with her.

'Harry,' said Mrs. Grey, on their return home from church, and she called her second son to her, 'I have something to say to you.'

Harry and his brothers had returned home at the conclusion of the sermon, and were taking care of their little brother Joseph and of the baby till their parents' return.

'What do we go to church for, Harry?'

The crimson colour mounted, even to his temples, as he replied, 'We go to pray to God, and to praise him, and to hear

his word read, and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ preached by his ministers.'

'It is very sad,' said his mother, 'that one who can give so clear an account of the reason for going to church, should be so unconcerned and inattentive when there. At any rate, dear child, since you do not feel the value and the importance of being allowed to worship God in the great congregation, you will remain at home till you are in a better state for so blessed an employment.'

Harry was deeply pained by his mother's quiet rebuke, and by the punishment which she had pronounced upon him: it was a punishment to him, and to his brothers, when any one of them was thus obliged to be separated from the rest of the happy party. But it was always thus with regard to the services of religion among this family; they were taught to look upon one day in the courts of the Lord's house as better than a thousand elsewhere; and though Mrs. Grey knew that she could not give to her children a love of spiritual things, she took every wise way of leading them to look upon the sabbath as 'the holy of the Lord, and honourable,' as well as 'to call it a delight.' Their children were not taken to the solemn assembly when too young and too heedless to know what they were about; they were not lifted up to stand upon a seat or upon a hassock, as if on purpose to stare about them, till they learned to associate the habit of coming to the services of the sanctuary with the most irreverent habit of finding amusement in the looks and the dress of the congregation. Much as this excellent mother valued ordinances, and the outward things of religion, her chief anxiety was to teach her children that as 'God is a Spirit, they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,' John iv. 24. Thus, while she set before them, as far as she was able, the means of grace, she never failed to

pray that grace itself might be conveyed by those means into their hearts. The Lord's day with this family was not a mere day of solemn acts and set observances, it was in no sense a day of strictness or of gloom, but from the earliest hours of the morning, even to the hour of evening rest, all were taught to ask themselves continually, 'Are these my thoughts holy? my words holy? my actions holy? Do I remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy?'

Alas! we are well aware how dull and distasteful the holiness of the sabbath rest must be to the mind which is at enmity against God; and every carnal mind is in this state. To how many might we say, in the words of the apostle, 'I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal?' 1 Cor. iii. 1. It is not only true that 'sin keeps no sabbaths,' but that to all who are not spiritual the day and its services can be only weariness. Is it said that 'the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath,' we answer that man was created to honour and to serve Him who is the Lord of the sabbath day; and again and again would we say to those who profane or disregard this season of holy rest—Beware what you are about, for it is by the Lord's day, and your enjoyment of the Lord's day, that you may know your state before God, and whether you are growing in grace and in fitness for the presence of your Lord in the courts of his glory above.

The public services of the Lord's day were over; again Katharine and her parents and her brothers had met Elizabeth and her parents, again they had worshipped together, and again they had separated.

That Sunday had been a day of peculiar beauty: the season of the year and the state of the atmosphere had seemed to combine together to make the hours of the mere natural day a beautiful emblem of inward sabbath peace and enjoy-

ment. There seemed to be a spirit of quiet cheerfulness in every bosom, which had spread itself over every countenance, for the penitent Harry had been restored to favour, though he had not been permitted to attend the evening service. The windows were open in the room where the family were assembled. The master of the house was reading, and the mistress and the children, and Lizzy the servant girl, and the old nurse, sat around, all with open Bibles in their hands. They conversed together, and the children gave as well as they could an account of the sermons they had heard. At the close of the conversation Mrs. Grey said, 'Here is a portion of Holy Scripture to which our minister called our attention to-day. It is in the twenty-eighth chapter of Numbers, at the ninth verse, "On the sabbath day were offered two lambs of the first year without spot." He said that it was the daily custom to offer one lamb every morning and every evening, as the type of the daily remembrance of the one sacrifice once offered by Jesus Christ, the true "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29; and not only in mere remembrance, but in prayerful remembrance; for thus the worshipper made confession of his sins, which needed so great a sacrifice on the part of God; and thus he declared his faith, which earnestly and joyfully looked to that precious sacrifice as its only ground of acceptance on his part. But when the two lambs were offered on the sabbath day, this confession was doubled, and the look of faith was doubly intent upon the all-sufficient atonement then set forth by the shadow of the sacrifice of the tabernacle. The other passage to which he referred was a most remarkable one; it was at the forty-sixth chapter of the prophet Ezekiel, at the first verse: "Thus saith the Lord God; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened." Again at the fourth verse,

"And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the Lord in the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish." In this Scripture, the Holy Spirit, by the lips of the prophet, seems to point to gospel times; and it is surely no fanciful interpretation of the passage to suppose, that, by the gate of the inner court looking toward the east, which is shut on the six working days, and which shall be opened on the sabbath, the way of access to heavenly rest should be on the Lord's day more open to the worshipper than on the other days, who, as he has more time and opportunities and freedom from worldly cares, should seek for a sevenfold earnestness of spirit, a sevenfold intensiveness of adoration, nay, a sevenfold devotedness of dedication of himself and all his powers to that redeeming and atoning Lord who is peculiarly the Lord of the sabbath. For while every day in the week, under the Christian dispensation, is dedicated to the service of the Lord, and bears upon its golden hours this inscription, "Holiness unto the Lord," the sabbath day is the queen of days, the pearl of the week; and as a wise and holy man has left on record, with regard to it, the observance of this day "hath ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time; and the week that has been so begun hath been blessed and prosperous to me; so that I could easily make an estimate of my successes the week following by the manner of my passing this day."* Bear this in mind, dear children, during the whole of the Lord's day; and remember that much of the sacredness and the sweetness of the remainder of the week are dependent on it.'

Then they all knelt down together, and the father of the family, in a short and simple prayer, commended himself and his household to the care and to the grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

* Sir Matthew Hale.

And now the hour was come for retiring to rest, and Mrs. Grey and her children were separated for the night. The sweet and peaceful closing of this blessed day was as lovely as its morning hours were bright, and there were peaceful smiles on every face, for the day had been dedicated wholly to the Lord; and though, as the gentle mother reminded her children, all our best services are but a poor and worthless offering to our gracious Lord, yet they who strive to serve him, who are much in communion with him, and who desire to show forth his praise, not only with their lips but in their lives, they feel the sweet calm of a good conscience within at the very time that they confess themselves and their services to be imperfect and defiled, and pray that their conscience may be 'purged from dead works to serve the living God.'

Katharine and her mother were left alone, and were sweetly singing together in a low voice one of James Montgomery's beautiful and plaintive hymns, when there came a sudden interruption to that quiet hour. There was a hurried step upon the stair, and Mr. Grey appeared, looking pale and much alarmed, and put into his wife's hand a slip of paper, upon which was written, with a trembling hand; 'Come at once, Elizabeth is dying!' Mrs. Grey rose up instantly with a self-possession and composure which distinguished her character. She put on her bonnet and shawl, and she said to her husband, 'Go at once, Henry, to the doctor and to our minister; they may have been sent for, but see that they come, and come not yourself till you bring them with you; I will go at once.' She turned to Katharine, who stood pale, motionless, and silent, and kissed her, and then with a sudden thought she said; 'Dear child, you would wish to go with me!' Katharine's face was as bright with a smile as it was instantly bathed with tears; but with the same self-possession

as her mother, she lost not a moment in being ready, and in a few minutes they were on their way to the farm.

Elizabeth's mother had been right when she saw with alarm the rich bloom upon her cheek, and the unusual lustre of her eyes that morning. Her call had been sudden, but her life had been one of watchfulness and preparation. She was one of the lovely band of the wise virgins, and she had stood with her lamp burning, and with oil in her vessel with her lamp, and when the Bridegroom came she was ready, and went in with Him to the marriage-feast. She had been able to speak but a few words, but those few words had told of the assurance of faith and of the foretaste of eternal rest. She smiled when her aunt and her beloved Katharine came and knelt beside the bed on which she was lying: to Katharine she said, 'We have partaken to-day of the supper of the Lord on earth; we shall meet, dear Katharine, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, bright with his glory.' To her aunt she said, 'It is the Lord's day: it has always been a day of sweetest rest to me. He calls me to enter into His rest! If the Lord's day is the type of paradise, I have heard a voice from heaven, saying, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!' She could say no more, the exertion had already been too much for her; it was evident that she now wished to say something to her mother, but she could not. Slowly and feebly she extended her hand to Katharine, and then she placed her cousin's hand in that of her mother, and she looked them both in the face with a long and yearning look of tenderest affection. Soon after she closed her eyes, and so gently fell asleep in Jesus.

The doctor came, the minister came, but it was too late for either to administer relief to the gentle girl. Her bodily suffering had been short, and her pale form was already lying in the stillness of death, while the dark blood still oozing

from her mouth, and trickling down her cheek and throat, which were clear and colourless as ivory, too plainly showed the cause of her death.

How was it, and why, that Elizabeth was so soon and so suddenly removed? The question was asked by one and by another. Her pious mother gave at once the answer which even in that hour of deep anguish satisfied herself, 'It is the Lord. He hath done what seemeth him good, and we must say to Him, Thy will be done.'

Mr. and Mrs. William Grey were on the eve of leaving the farm, for their lease had expired, and a small estate had been left them at Thornburn, in the extreme north of England. The death of Elizabeth rather hastened their departure. When Mrs. Grey came to take leave of her sister, and was spending the whole day with her, having arranged for their departure early in the following week, Katharine's mother said, 'We have been thinking much of Elizabeth's last significant action, and we have come to this conclusion, that Katharine shall be lent to you to supply her place. I know the comfort she will be to you in your delicate health and in your loneliness at Thornburn; and though my heart is heavy at the thought of parting with her, Elizabeth's last wish shall be obeyed. Katharine shall be to you as a daughter. Perhaps we shall all meet again in this world. Perhaps we shall never meet till this painful life is over; but we are preparing to meet our God, even our Christ, when he shall come in his glory; and he has given us by his blood a legal right, as he is giving us, I trust, by his Spirit a personal fitness for that eternal rest of which his own day is the best and loveliest type—the rest that remaineth for the people of God, Heb. iv. 9.'

THE SUNDAY NEWSPAPER;

OR,

KATHARINE.—PART II.

'How long will ye love vanity?'—PSALM iv. 2.

IT was on the evening of the Lord's day, Katharine entered the sick-chamber of her uncle. She had just come in from church, and was very anxious to know how he had been during her absence. Katharine had been a resident with her uncle at Thornburn for many years. Her aunt had died soon after their removal to the north, and from that time Katharine had been the mistress of her uncle's house, not only yielding him the obedience of a good and duteous child, but watching over his declining health, and giving him much assistance in the care and management of his affairs. Her long abode in the north was at length drawing to its close. Her uncle was

a dying man. The old servant, who sat by his bed-side, behind the curtain, shook her head and looked Katharine in the face with an expression that seemed to say, 'It is all over.' A fearful change had indeed taken place in the countenance of the good old man—the change of death; but a gentle smile played over his wan and wasted features, as his gaze seemed to recover itself from his look of vacancy at the sight of Katharine.

'Dear, dear child,' he said, 'I am going to leave you, and nothing disturbs me but the thought that we must part. I have given up everything; yes, even you my last and best treasure, more to me than a daughter, better to me than a friend. And now, Katharine, let me tell you that I have a word at parting for you, it is God's words from my lips, "Prepare to meet thy God!"'

'Strange!' said Katharine; 'they are the very words of our good minister. He has been preaching on them, and I was about to bring them to you, for you always wish to hear the text. Such words, dear uncle, are well fitted to comfort and inspirit us at this sad time.' Katharine turned away, for her heart was heavy, and her utterance was well-nigh choked by her grief. She knew, for she had been told by the doctor, that her uncle could not recover; but this change had come so very soon, so long before the time she had thought of—if she had thought of any but a distant and undefined period. Her uncle knew that she was weeping, and he said,

'Go and compose yourself, my poor child; you know the way; and when you are calm, come back to me, and do not leave me again. Only while you are away, remember that I am speaking the words of truth when I tell you, that I am happy; that I wish to go; that I smile to think the weary way is almost passed, and home, my blessed home, is so nigh.'

Katharine could not conceal the sobs of agonizing grief

which convulsed her frame, and she hastened from the room. 'Katharine,' said her uncle, when she returned to his chamber, 'think of those words, "Prepare to meet thy God," when I am gone, and when you are again with your father and your family, and have left this old farm-house and lonely mountain-hamlet for ever. I do not fear for you; I know your faith to be not merely the faith of belief, but of trust. You will meet with many trials in the new sphere to which you are going, but live close to God in private, and all will be well; and whenever you think of me—and you will do so, I am sure, continually—let my last words come also before you, "Prepare to meet thy God." Katharine, I am going to meet Him. The Master is coming and calleth for me. My iniquity is pardoned, my warfare is accomplished. By grace I am saved through faith, and that not of myself. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. There are no bands in my death, for the sting of death is gone. There is no frown upon the countenance of my Judge, for I go to meet Him washed in his blood, and justified by his righteousness; and it seems already to me as if God with his own gentle hand had wiped away all tears from my eyes. And now, Katharine, that you are calm, sit down and wait with me the presence of my Lord, for I know that He is nigh. Open your Bible, and read to me a few words from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, to fix my mind upon, that I may seem to hear the Lord Jesus speaking to me. I am too weak to say more.'

Katharine sat down, and she read aloud the following words, the gracious words of our Lord himself to his disciples, 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also,' John xiv. 3.

'You have chosen well,' said the old man, after a short

pause: 'I cannot express the comfort which those lovely words have brought into my heart. He will come again; yes, he is now near at hand, and He has promised that where he is there I shall be also. This is the best joy of heaven, to be for ever with the Lord. Katharine,' he said again, after a much longer pause, and he spoke slowly and with much difficulty, 'they were called by our Lord Himself the wise virgins, who were prepared to meet the Bridegroom. Be of the number, my child, of the wise virgins. Prepare, prepare to meet Him.' These were the last words of the good old man.

'He is gone home,' said the gentle mourner to herself. She wept long, as a child weeps for the parent with whom she has passed a long and a happy portion of her life; but there was no bitterness in her grief.

Katharine was standing alone in the quiet churchyard of Thornburn, a new-made grave was at her feet, and she had come to take her first and last look upon the humble grave-stone which had been put up that evening. The inscription was short and plain: 'Sacred to the memory of William Grey, who departed this life on the fourth day of August, 18**, aged 70 years. "Prepare to meet thy God." '

'Blessed, blessed words,' said Katharine; 'they lift up my spirit from this melancholy place, and yet it is not melancholy, for here the wearied and worn-out body is sown in weakness to be raised in power. I shall never forget this little churchyard, and the living words upon this grave-stone. Yes, they are living words, for they are the words of the Spirit of life, even of Him who is the Lord and Giver of life.'

In a fortnight after her uncle's death, Katharine set off on her return to her father's house in the south of England, from which she had been absent many years. When she arrived at her journey's end, she found two of her brothers awaiting her arrival at the office where the coach stopped.

She was not a little pleased when the younger of them sprang forward, and opened the door of the coach with earnest look and eager voice, searching for her. She was not a little pleased with the fine ingenuous expression of his countenance, and the delight and affection with which he grasped her hand, and claimed her as his sister. Nor was she less delighted when a much older and more manly countenance presented itself; and Philip, the younger brother, was, in a manner, gently forced to give place, while her eldest brother carefully assisted her to get out of the coach; and when, after having attended to all her packages, he drew her arm tenderly within his own as they walked towards her father's house. Katharine was delighted, indeed, with every one around her, when seated in the midst of the household circle; she saw every eye fixed with looks of fond affection on herself, and replied to the questions of so many kind voices, and found herself an object of the most affectionate interest to them all.

'You weep, my dear Katharine,' said her brother Joseph, who was an invalid, and who had watched her countenance, perhaps, with more intense anxiety than any of the party, and who sat beside her holding her hand in his; 'you are unhappy, I am sure you are; but we will do all in our power to supply the loss which you have met with.'

'I weep,' said Katharine—and as she spoke her tears flowed faster, and her words faltered with emotion—'I weep because you are all so kind to me; because I feel so very happy; because it is so new to me, such a new and overpowering joy to find myself so loved and cared for by my own dear family. Yes, I must always mourn for my good, kind uncle, but I do not wish him back again. I would not recall his spirit, now set free from the burden of sin, and cleansed by the blood of Him who redeemed him. I shall go to him, but I would not have him return to me. I am come to live with

you, dear father, and with you, my dear brothers, and with my sweet sister Margaret here,' turning, as she spoke, to the slender girl who was sitting on the other side of her, and whose fair mild face beamed with admiring love, as she never ceased to gaze upon her; and well might all of that household circle look with admiration upon Katharine, as she sat in her deep mourning garments, looking (what, in truth, she was) so modest and humble of heart, so thoughtful and intelligent, and with so calm and lovely an expression of holy peace upon her brow.

Katharine had not seen any of her family for more than fifteen years. She had resided with her uncle in Cumberland, and her father's house was in the large county town of ——— in the south of England. She had left home when a girl of sixteen and was now nearly two-and-thirty. Her little sister, an infant at her departure, was nearly grown a woman, and her brother Philip she had never seen before. He had been born during her absence, and his birth had been followed by the death of her mother.

'You will wish to go to bed early to-night,' said her father, when their simple evening meal was concluded. 'I trust Margaret, with Lizzy's help, has made everything comfortable in your room for you.'

'I am tired enough,' said Katharine, 'but I would not begin the first night of my abode among you by missing family prayers.' She received no answer. 'Perhaps you will have them a little earlier for my sake to-night.' Her father still said nothing; her brothers stared at one another. A deep blush spread itself over Katharine's pale face as the truth flashed across her mind. 'They have no prayer together, I fear,' she said to herself.

But was it or was it not the time to speak? She was not apt to hesitate, but she doubted now, when her father said, 'I do not know how it is that we have no family prayer. We always

had when you left home, and, indeed, up to your poor mother's death. I do not know how we came to leave it off; for my part, I like the custom. Suppose we read a chapter, and offer up a few words of prayer, William, since your sister wishes it.' The old man looked as if asking permission of his son.

William answered in his usual low voice, 'Katharine has said nothing, has expressed no wish.'

Then Katharine spoke out at once. 'It is the first and most deliberate wish of my heart,' she said; and the mild calm look with which she met the eyes of all, and the clear firm voice with which she spoke, were felt to be the look and voice of decision.

'Dear father, dear brothers, let us not meet and separate for the night, at this our first meeting, without blessing the Lord God who has made us so happy, without praying for his pardon and his gracious help, and searching his word, that we may learn and know his will.'

'Ah, do,' said the old man; 'do Will or Harry, one of you, offer up a few words of prayer.'

'Father, you had better do it, if any one is to do it,' said the eldest brother; 'you have been used to do so.' Harry burst into a loud, but slightly taunting laugh.

'Are you come to make Methodists of us, Kate?' he said; and paused, waiting for an answering laugh, or smile, from Katharine, for there was nothing but gay good humour in his ridicule.

There was no frown on Katharine's face, but there was a calm gravity which checked Harry in spite of himself.

'I cannot jest on these matters, dear Harry. Father, you have not forgotten that I used to bring the Bible, and place it on the table before you, when I was a girl.' Katharine looked to the accustomed spot, the Bible was still there. She took the Bible from its place, and as she wiped the thick dust

which marked its neglect, she sighed to herself. She sat down beside her father. 'I would sing if there were any one to join me,' she continued, 'for that was always my part in our devotions at Thornburn.'

'Do sing, dear child, we have had no singing, and few prayers, since your dear mother died. Nothing has gone well since she was taken from us. You are surely come to supply her place. Do sing, do sing.'

'It is delightful to obey such a command from your lips, dear father. I will sing—we will all sing. Be pleased to give out the hymn for us.' The old man took the hymn-book which his daughter was holding out to him, her finger pointed to the place.

'Through the day thy love has spared us,
Now we lay us down to rest;
Through the silent watches guard us,
Let no foe our peace molest:
Jesus, now our Guardian be,
Sweet it is to trust in thee.

'Pilgrims here on earth and strangers,
Dwelling in the midst of foes,
Us and ours preserve from dangers,
In thine arms may we repose,
And when life's sad day is past,
Rest with thee in heaven at last.'

Katharine was left alone for the night: she gave way to an agony of grief. Her heart had felt a void from the moment she entered the house. It seemed to her, long and deeply as she had grieved before, that she had never really felt her mother's death till now. Her heart yearned towards her mother, and she felt as if she could not be comforted. Never had she felt so overcome by a sense of weakness and helplessness, for she now saw what her mother's influence had been, and what the family had become without that influence. She

wept long and bitterly, and her weeping relieved her; but when she left off weeping she knelt down to pray. Tired and weary as she was, she could not lie down to take any rest, till she had brought her burden of troubles and her difficulties to Him who has invited us to cast all our care upon Him. Her heart was heavy, and her mind perplexed by her new and trying sphere; but Katharine was not one to yield or sink down discouraged under difficulties. Her intellect cleared itself to look into and understand them, and her spirit rose to meet them resolutely. She had been for years accustomed to act as the mistress of her uncle's house, and had there been placed at times in trying circumstances. 'If I am to be of use to this dear family,' she said, 'it will not be by any weak compliances to what I know to be wrong, but by speaking and doing the thing that is right. Thou shalt guide me with counsel, O Lord, nay, thou hast left us thy written promise, that if any lack wisdom, and ask of thee, thou wilt give unto us that wisdom which is from above. O Lord, make me thus wise in thy pure and heavenly wisdom —wise, to be the means, in thy gracious hands, to win the souls, as well as the love, of these dear ones, for thy Son Jesus Christ's sake.'

Katharine slept sweetly and soundly, and rejoiced to find that she had been able to awake early the next morning. It was the Lord's day, and if she loved to rise early on one day *more* than another, it was on that blessed day. The golden beams of the rising sun had lighted up her little chamber, and in the fresh morning breeze a long and loosened jasmine branch was beating against her casement. Katharine smiled and sighed, for she was reminded at once of the luxuriant jasmine which she had trained round her window at Thornburn, but which, in that more northern climate, had not yet put forth its blossoms. Here it was already covered with its

silvery stars, and as she threw open the casement, their fragrance came in with the balmy air.

'This is a late house on a Sunday morning,' said Mr. Grey to Katharine, as he met her at the foot of the stairs, 'though I find that you, like me, are an early riser.'

'Oh, here is one of my brothers, at least," said Katharine.

Harry was standing at the breakfast table.

'Not able to wait even for you, my darling Kate,' he said, 'for I am off in five minutes for the day. Sorry to miss your company the first day, but a long engagement, a very particular engagement in the way. They told me you would not be here till next Wednesday or Thursday, or I would have put off Jem Leake and his sister. I really am sorry to leave you; and now, there's a dear creature, pour me out another cup, and cut me another slice of that ham, for I am as hungry as a hunter, and we have twelve miles to drive; and here, Lizzy,' he cried, calling to the stout servant, 'come quick, and button my straps. I called you half an hour ago, madam,' he added, as he struck out his foot, that the straps might be passed under his boot and be buttoned. 'Why, Kate, love, you look as grave as a judge; you are not cross; no, no, I am sure there are no cross lines in this dear face,' he said, as he kissed her affectionately; 'and really I am sorry to leave you.'

'Never mind me,' replied Katharine, mildly, but gravely. 'I was looking as I feel, dear Harry, not cross, but sad, very sad, I tell you frankly, to see how little you regard this sacred day.'

'Why, my dear woman,' he answered, 'you are a downright Methodist, a Puritan! Where in the world is the harm of a little excursion, a little cheerful, innocent pleasure on a Sunday? I am no drunkard; I never play at cards, or even bagatelle; and there I stand cooped up all the week behind

old Cooper's counter till my legs ache, screwing up parcels till my fingers ache; and writing up day books till my eyes ache, and puffing off his Brummagem goods till my jaws ache, and am I not to have one day to myself for a little harmless relaxation? You are too strict! There we were so busy last night, that I could not go with William and Philip to meet you. Am I to have no pleasure?'

'There are two kinds of pleasure,' said Katharine; 'we shall see at the end of the day which has the best title to the name.'

'Here they are, here they are, and I am off, for that horse won't stand; good-bye. If I can, I'll be back in time to go to evening service with you.'

In another minute the gig, with its thoughtless burden, was rattling past the window. It was a long time before any one else, except Margaret, came down. Katharine and her father and sister and Lizzy, read together a portion of the word of God, and prayed. They had finished breakfast before William and Philip made their appearance.

'You will go this morning, I am sure; you cannot let my sister and father have no one but me to walk with them.'

These words were partly whispered, but Katharine heard most of them. They were addressed by Margaret to her youngest brother.

'Of course, I mean to go this morning,' he answered in a louder whisper, 'only do not make such a fuss about it, or I shall always be expected to go; and you know I can't always go, and I am no great admirer of your favourite Mr. Adams. I think, with Harry, that he is most illiberal and a great deal too particular. Fred Price never goes near him now, ever since that last attack of his upon the races. Fred says he has done with him.'

'Where is William?' said Katharine, as they were setting off for church.

'I am sure I cannot tell,' replied Philip; 'but I saw him stroll out about half an hour ago.'

'Does he not go to church?'

'Very seldom, except in the evening; and not always then,' was the answer she received.

As they entered on their return from church, William threw down the newspaper which he had been reading, with a yawn. Katharine said something about her disappointment at his absence. He replied, very quietly,

'Were you disappointed, my dear Katharine? Why, to say the truth, I do not very often trouble the church with my presence. I can read at home, or I sometimes take my book into the fields with me. I say with the poet—

> "Go thou and seek the house of prayer,
> I to the woodlands will repair."

I am sure, my dear girl, had I thought it would please you I would have made one of your party this morning; I would have gone to oblige you.'

'You are very kind to me,' said Katharine, gravely, 'and I thank you; but I am more disappointed by such an answer than by what I trusted was an occasional absence.'

'Nothing new, sir, nothing new,' said William, as his father took up the newspaper, having first settled himself in his large arm-chair, and put on his spectacles. 'The Turks, to be sure, have had a thrashing. Funds very low. The folks in Mark-lane terribly down in the mouth at the continuance of this fine weather, and the splendid appearance of the crops all over the country. I heard just now over at the Crown, that old Slycroft gets more savage every day; but it seems he has been buying up a deal of wheat at G—— as well as here. By-the-by, Katharine, I forgot to ask you, how do the crops look in the north?'

Katharine was leaving the room; whether she did or did

not hear the question, she made no answer. She went up to Joseph's chamber. The excitement of his sister's coming had been rather too much for him, and he had been advised by the doctor to keep quietly in bed for the day. He was sitting up in bed, however, and held out his arms to Katharine, and looked at her with smiles full of affection upon his pale face.

'Oh, sister, look here, do look here,' said Margaret, who was sitting on the bed, 'did you ever see anything so horrible? Joseph has been telling me about the most dreadful murder; and here is the room where the body was found; and this, they say, is a capital likeness of the murderer: they had hold of him for some time, it seems, but he managed to escape, and now a hundred pounds are offered for his life. What an entertaining paper this is! It is very kind of Mrs. Turner, at the Crown over the way, to send it to poor Joseph.'

'And this is the Lord's day,' said Katharine, as she stood before her own quiet window, and her eyes rested upon the old church tower. 'Alas! I cannot bear to judge others, or blame those whom I love so well; but this will never do—it must not be. It is not thus that those prepare to meet their God, to whom the sabbath here below is the fair but faint type of the eternal rest above.'

She sat down and opened her Bible; but just then the door was almost burst open by Lizzy,

'Well to be sure, miss,' she cried out, 'I beg your pardon for coming in so sudden like, but I have hunted for you high and low. They are all waiting, and the goose will be spoiled. I sent it in piping hot I promise you,' and she drew her red and heated arm across her red and heated brow as she said so. 'To be sure, what a heat I'm in. Pray go down and eat a bit of your own goose; if it eats as it looks it's the best goose I ever dressed, and I have cooked many a score. It's beautiful!

I got a few apples off the codling-tree up against the wall, to make you a good boatfull of apple sauce, for Master Philip always scolds if there is not plenty of apple sauce.'

'You were not at church then, Lizzy.'

'Me at church! never of a morning! I have work enough to clean myself in time for the lecture. You see, my dear Miss Kattern,' she said, familiarly, as they went down stairs, 'your father and brothers like a better dinner than common on a Sunday, and I'm glad to get them something nice and hot, and tasty-like. For my part, I relish a hot dinner of a Sunday myself.'

'But the goose would have kept, Lizzy.'

'Kept! ay to be sure it would; but it couldn't be better than it is—it's beautiful.'

At last Katharine was able to pass an hour alone in her own chamber, and this time she bolted her door. 'I am ready to find fault with others,' she said to herself, 'and though I must not let these ungodly ways pass without at least entering my protest against them, in the kindest, wisest manner, my chief business is with my own heart. I see their outward conduct; their disadvantages have been great, compared with mine; perhaps their temptations have been more trying. Lord, teach us, help us to be prepared to meet Thee at Thy coming.'

It was said of a lady of high rank and great talent, but whose chief excellence was her unpretending goodness and piety, that she was truly humble, because her mind was habitually fixed, not upon what she possessed in the eye of man, but upon what she wanted in the sight of God. It was the same with Katharine; she was really humble; she did not talk of her humility; on the contrary, she would have complained to you of the pride within her heart, and the difficulty she had to overcome it. A person of so meek

and lovely a temper, was well fitted for the work which it was so plainly her duty to attempt! One sweet and peaceful hour did Katharine spend in secret communion with her God. Once or twice her thoughts wandered back to the quiet and almost lonely hamlet where the latter part of her life had been spent; to the little church among the quiet hills, with the parsonage of good old Mr. Parker on the slope of the hill just opposite the church-door; and she knew that at that hour the venerable man would be coming down and crossing the rude bridge which led to the school, and the happy children assembling from every side, and she herself would have been waiting in the old church-porch, and looking round upon the hills covered with blooming heather, and the deep, deep green of the meadows by the side of the lovely river Eden, for at Thornburn everything was done with the regularity of clock-work, and she herself had never missed for many a long year to be standing waiting and watching for the approach of her beloved pastor, for his kind words and looks, and for the little passage of Scripture with which he was sure to accost her on that day, as if always feeling that he was a messenger from the Lord, and had his message to deliver, his watchword as he called it. The very last words which she had heard from his lips on the Lord's day before her uncle's death had been, 'Prepare to meet thy God,' the same words on which he had preached; the same which had occupied her uncle's thoughts just before his summons to meet his God through the grave and gate of death. Then she thought of the funeral procession, when the body of her uncle was laid beneath the green turf of that churchyard; and she felt assured that many a kindly look would be cast upon the humble grave-stone with its blessed inscription; and many a kindly thought would be sent after herself to her strange home in the south; and she hoped that many of the holy and prayerful disciples of that

flock, with the pastor himself, might be led often and often to remember her before the throne of grace. They had promised to do so, and she had received their promises as precious pledges of future blessings. Did Katharine wish herself back again at Thornburn? Oh no; she felt that she was in her proper place at the head of her father's household, with her dear brothers and her sister Margaret. She humbly hoped that He who is the fountain of wisdom, and who had graciously taught her to know by her own inward experience the pleasantness and the peace of true religion, would make her the blessed instrument of turning some—why not all the members of her family, to love his holy ways?

There was a gentle tap at her door.

'Are you come to sit with me, my Margaret?' she said, as she saw her young sister on opening the door: 'come in and we will read together.'

'That I am sure I will,' said Margaret, 'for I love you very much, and I want you to teach me how to be like you. If nothing else made me love you, your likeness to my dear mother would. That was why I could not take my eyes off you last night; and you speak so like her, and have, as all my brothers say, just the way that she had of making everybody mind you, without any scolding or frowning. I have never been happy since she died till now, and now I feel so very happy;' and as the gentle girl said this, she put her arms round her sister's neck and sobbed aloud.

Katharine felt as happy as her sister did, and she kissed her tenderly; she felt still happier, for she rejoiced before God that he had already brought her into favour and tender love with her own family, thus giving her grace to win without the word, in order that she might lead them to love the word, if it pleased Him, first for her sake, and then entirely for his own sake.

'And Joseph, poor Joseph, loves you so,' the weeping girl continued; 'he has been all this time talking about you, and he made me send back that newspaper immediately, and would not let me speak about it, or read one word of it to him again; for he watched your looks, and he says he is sure you did not like our reading it, you looked so very grave when I showed it to you, and turned your eyes away, though you were so kind and so gentle, and had all the while such a sweet expression of goodness, just like our dear mother's, on your face. He says, though I did not observe it, that you put the newspaper on one side. Lizzy, too, has been talking for a long time to my father, she says, about you; and she told him she hoped her dear old mistress's ways would be brought back into the house on Sundays, and all other days. My brothers say that Lizzy carries things too much as she pleases; and, in fact, she sometimes scolds, and at other times does just what any one tells her in a foolishly good-natured way; and she has been once or twice very pert to old aunt Crossley, because aunt has lectured her; but, dear me, what am I about? I came to tell you that aunt Crossley was waiting to speak to you at the street-door, for she will not come in because it is Sunday; and she has been waiting there all this time; a pretty scrape I am in, for she is so very cross if ever we keep her waiting, and it tires her to stand for any length of time.'

Katharine hastened down, but her aunt Crossley was gone. She had left a message for her niece.

'We are to let you know, with her respects,' said William, 'that there is an evening lecture at church; supposing, I conceive,' he added, raising his eyebrows and shoulders at the same time, 'that there was no one here to tell you.'

'Why, you know, brother,' said Margaret, archly, 'that sometimes if father is poorly and cannot go, there is no one to

walk with me but Lizzy, for one of my brothers sits chatting in Mrs. Turner's parlour over the way at the Crown, and another perhaps is boating or driving, and as for Phil, nobody ever knows what becomes of him.'

'Well, well, child,' said the good-humoured but slothful William, taking one of his hands out of his pocket to pat her cheek, 'here is a new mistress come home to set us all to rights, and we all love her so well,' he said, looking Katharine fondly in the face, 'that there is no telling what may be brought about among us; and, for my part, I am certainly going to church to-night, I have just promised father to do so.'

'And now, dear Margaret,' said Katharine, 'you and I will still read our chapter together. Let us go and sit down in that pleasant garden-seat, at the end of the broad gravel walk. If I remember rightly, it looks over the green fields between Lady Harper's lodge and the town. Dear girl, go up into my room, if you please, and bring me down the square silk handkerchief I left on the bed, and my small clasped Bible. I will go at once to the garden, and you can join me there.'

As Katharine advanced towards the end of the garden she heard voices in the summer-house—a spacious shed, the boarded back of which was towards the garden, while the front, which was partly filled up, as the sides were, with trellis-work, was towards the fields and open country.

'I tell you what,' said a voice which was strange to her ear, 'it is the finest battle that has ever been fought;' and then followed a description and a discussion, in which her brother Philip was the other speaker, of a low, brutal prize-fight. We shall not disgust our readers with the details of such an encounter, or the slang so strange to Katharine's ears, and, as it seemed to her, so familiar to the lips of her brother Philip: such language is common enough in the columns of

more than one Sunday newspaper, of whose contents it is a shame even to speak.

Katharine walked on all the time that this conversation was coming to her ears. She had stood before the summer-house some minutes before she was perceived either by Philip or his companion. Philip coloured, and then laughed aloud, but his laugh was a little forced; the other lad tried to look dignified, but only looked sullen and sheepish. Both their heads had been bent down over the newspaper, which was spread out upon the table in the summer-house, and both their mouths were from time to time sending out puffs of smoke from the cigars which were held alternately between their lips and their fingers.

'Only reading for a moment,' said Philip, 'from Fred Price's Sunday paper, the account of the great fight, sister Katharine, which has been fought at Wormwood Scrubs.'

'Philip, Philip,' said Margaret, who now made her appearance, holding up her finger, 'is this the way you keep your promise? Did you not promise me that you would never buy another number of that odious paper?'

'Well, and I have not bought one; this is Fred's paper, an't it, Fred?' but Fred was gone and the paper with him; he had jumped over the low hedge which separated the garden from the field.

Margaret, without any ceremony, took the cigar from her brother's lips, and threw it over the hedge after his companion, and then lightly brushing away the little heaps of ashes which lay upon the table with her handkerchief, she said, coaxingly,

'Come, Phil, my darling Phil, and sit down between Katharine and me.'

'And we will read,' said Katharine, in her low, sweet, serious voice, 'not of life in London, dear Philip, but of life, eternal life in heaven; of Him who is the very Light of life,

Believe me, Philip, when you have once learned to love Him, you will think no more of Sunday newspapers.'

They were met by Harry, as they returned to the house.

'I came to call you in to tea, good folks,' was his first salutation. 'You are surprised to see me, no doubt; but I came back faster then I went, for, to say the truth, that tall brute of a horse would have run through a brick wall, and he has been running away with us all, and chucked us all clean out of the gig—though clean I cannot call it, for he chucked poor Sophy Leake into a large heap of road scrapings, all soft mud, and Jem and I into the ditch beyond, and he has kicked the gig all to pieces, and lamed himself into the bargain.'

'And for all this,' said Philip, 'I suppose you will have to pay.'

'Not for all, but for half,' replied Harry, laughing, but with a very sad, foolish-looking laugh.

'But are you not hurt, my poor Harry?' said Katharine, very kindly; 'were none of you hurt?'

'Not in the least, though frightened enough, I promise you.'

'And intend for the future—' said Katharine.

'To stay at home and go to church like a good boy, I suppose you mean me to say. Not I, my darling Kate. I would have you to know, that I am not going to be cooped up in this dull town on a Sunday, or tied to the apron-string of my fair Methodist of a sister.'

'But you will go to church with us to-night,' said Katharine, mildly passing her arm within that of her brother, and paying no heed whatever to his bantering.

'Well, I suppose I shall,' he replied, turning his head round, and staring her in the face. 'What a strange girl you are, Katharine! I never saw any one like you—except one, he added, 'and I see the likeness now. Dear, dear Katharine, when you look and speak as you do now, I shall be able to

refuse you nothing. Oh, it is mother come back again!' He turned away his head, but not before Katharine had seen the tears streaming down his face.

'Ah,' said Katharine to herself, 'who can calculate the influence of such a mother as mine, years and years after her death, upon her children! She opened her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue was the law of kindness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed.'

That night, a little before the service began, Mr. Grey and five of his children walked up the aisle of —— church, and took their places in one of the large pews near the pulpit; all the household were there but Joseph, the invalid: even Lizzy managed to be there; for the old nurse of the family had come, as she usually did, to take her supper with them on the Sunday evening, and she sat by Joseph's bedside, and told him about the sermon which good Mr. Wynter had preached in the morning.

It seemed strange to Katharine to find herself in that large and lofty church, and in the midst of that great congregation, after the small church and the little flock at Thornburn; but she heard the voices of all that goodly throng raised as one voice in prayer and in praise; and she saw her old gray-headed father, and her brothers and her young and gentle sister, around her, all brought within the sound of the gospel; what could she do but bless God for this? The clergyman who preached was an aged man; but as she looked upon him, and listened to him, she thought of the description given of one of God's most eminent servants—'His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated,' Deut. xxxiv. 7.

His words came with thrilling power to her heart, as he gave out the text on which he was about to preach, Isaiah lviii. 13, 14: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a

delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'

Margaret and her brothers looked at Katharine, and then at one another, as word after word of this remarkable Scripture was read aloud; but they did not catch the eye of Katharine. She seemed as if she were following the advice of George Herbert:

> 'In time of service seal up both thine eyes,
> And send them to thy heart;'

for she never raised her eyes, except to fix them on the venerable countenance of the preacher. The preacher spoke of the obligations of the Lord's day; the institution of a day of rest even in paradise; its observance in the wilderness; its place in the judicial and ceremonial law; its incorporation in the moral law;* the substitution of the first for the last day of the week: thus still the one sacred day in the seven, 'the queen of days and pearl of the week,' 'the jewel in the ring or circle of the week,' was set apart in commemoration not only of the rest of God the Creator, but of the resurrection of God the Redeemer, and the coming down of God the Sanctifier. He spoke of the way in which God had sanctified the day, and traced throughout the sacred record the sanctification of the day by his holy prophets and by his saints in all ages. He spoke of the duties of the Lord's day; first, of what we should not do; and secondly of what we should do.

* 'I account this command,' says Bishop Hopkins, 'to be *moral-positive*. Moral, in that it requires a due portion of our time to be dedicated to the service and worship of God. Positive, in that it prescribes one day in ...n for that especial service,' etc.

We do not attempt, however, to give the whole of the sermon, but there was one portion of it which we shall set before our readers, word for word.

'The character of the religion of too many among us,' said the preacher, 'may be thus described. Its continual demand and inquiry is, How much of the pleasant sin of the world can I manage to have my share of, and yet keep the name of a religious man, and get to heaven at last? How far can I go in this path? how much amusement can I take in this way? what licence can I give to my temper? how much scandal may I talk, and keep up my religious character? In fact, how much of my own will, how many of my own ways, how little denial of self, of my own self, can I *manage* with?—for manage is the word. Here it is that the minister of Christ must take his stand, and point out the subterfuges and excuses and deep deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, and its workings. He must tell his hearers plainly, that there is no such management in the character of the children of light; their object is single; the eye with which they look upon that object is also single. The questions which they ask their own heart continually are these—What shall I render unto the Lord? How can I give glory unto my God? How can I show some return of gratitude for all his mercies so undeserved by me? They do not ask, How far can I go in those ways which he is likely to disapprove, without being disapproved by him? How far can I venture in what is questionable and doubtful? but they say, Let me shun the outworks of temptation; let me dread every pleasure which is questionable and doubtful; let me seek my delight, where true delight is only to be found, in the total surrender of myself to do the will, and love the pleasure, and walk in the ways of my Father and my God. The ways of holiness may seem gloomy; to my own natural heart they may seem difficult, for

they call for the denial of self; but only where selfish gratification is sinful: and if they begin in self-denial, they always end in holy joy. If they begin with the strait gate, and the narrow way, they always lead to paths of pleasantness and peace. If they call me to bear my cross now, it is only that I may exchange that cross for a crown hereafter. And here,' he continued, 'I would speak on a subject about which every minister of the gospel has need to lift up his voice in every pulpit throughout the land. I fear, alas! that none of us are sufficiently aware of *the influence which Sunday newspapers are insensibly gaining in every grade of society*; an influence utterly opposed to the spirit of the gospel, the practice of the gospel, and the godliness which should distinguish the people of the living God as their peculiar character. All that is of the carnal mind, all that is of the corrupt world, all that is earthly, sensual, devilish, continue to swell this poisoned tide, which is, by degrees, advancing and overwhelming the fairest and brightest tracts, nay, all the fields of human society in this nominally Christian land. And what is this reading of Sunday newspapers? what is it, but the most wretched substitute for the sweet and holy enjoyment of sabbath peace? Ah, my brethren, what has it done for you—you, I mean, who are already enthralled by its deadly influence? You enjoy it now. I figure to myself the look of pleasure, the greedy interest with which the Sunday newspaper is received and read. I see poured into the mind on that day, when God calls the mind and heart of all his children to one frame—holiness; to one study—godliness; to one subject—the Christ of God; in a word, to the enjoyment of the sabbath—the holy day of rest to God and man, the commemoration day of the rising of Jesus Christ from the grave, as the conqueror of death and hell, and the first-born of many human brethren; that holy day which the Christian is taught to look upon as the type and shadow of

heaven itself, heaven above, the place of rest and true delight for evermore—I see, as I said, poured into the mind the full account of all the bustle and ungodliness of the whole week. I see crowded together for the Lord's day, the murders and adulteries of the week; yes, all for the consideration of the Lord's day! And, perhaps, while the house is at rest, and the best part of the family in the sanctuary of God, and the streets and the country are wearing the sabbath-day aspect of quietness and decency, the immortal soul of too many a reader is feasting on the garbage of some disgraceful prize-fight, or some low police report. The godlike powers of the soul are degrading themselves among such unmanly details, and such low-lifed descriptions. Unmanly I may well call them, for they are more like the contest of savage brutes than of the lords of God's creation. Often, too, in many of these newspapers there is no lack of sedition against "the powers that be, and which are ordained of God;" no lack of sly and subtle insinuations against the religion which is the professed faith of the reader: and there are statements so vile, that some of the very persons who are so infatuated as to tolerate them in the newspaper, would, I have no hesitation to say, at once reject them if the eye had met with them in a book, or had been brought to witness the reality of them. I can see the paper read and re-read even with yawning; the very advertisements read over in very idleness, as if for want of something to do: yet the Bible lies all the while unopened, as if it were too dull a book to excite interest or to afford pleasure. If all were morally right in the Sunday newspapers, still it would not be proper food for the mind of the true Christian; for it fills the heart with the week-day news, which ought to be filled with Christ and the things of Christ. Brethren, these things ought not so to be; how can you tolerate, or much more practise them? Oh, there is such a

thing as manly consistency and godly decision. I would ask those who hear the commandment, "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath-day," and whose prayer with reference to that commandment is, "O Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law," how they can answer to their conscience and to their God for their utter disregard of their duty? There are those, perhaps, now present also, who well know what it is to have their thoughts pre-occupied with the news of the world, and who have brought their minds to such a state, that the word of God can find no entrance there. Oh, the only news which should be read or heard on this holy day, is that news which is not of this world; the news which is the subject of the gospel-commission, tidings which can never be other than good news to fallen man. While the world stands, we shall be always able to find things new as well as old in the treasures there. The word of God is indeed as a rich mine, and he who digs deeply, and searches it diligently, shall be always making discovery of some new vein of fine gold, or bringing up some new gem of purest lustre which lay hid and unknown before. O, brethren, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed good news from a far country; and the song that shall be sung by those who are led back by the Conqueror to that pleasant land, shall be indeed a new song.'

When Katharine went home and entered her chamber, she could not fail to contrast what she had heard with what she had witnessed in her own family.

'And this is the world,' said she, mournfully. 'I have never known what it is till now; and this is but one day, and a day in one house, and among my own family! Are they worse than others? I have no reason to suppose so. And this is the Lord's day among a people called by his name! Is it thus that they pass that day which is ordained to be the

type of eternal rest? and are these the occupations by which they prepare to meet their God, on this the day peculiarly set apart for our withdrawal from the cares and the perplexities and the labours of the work-days of the week?' There was no harshness in Katharine's spirit, no want of charity towards others; she was ready to make every allowance, every excuse; but the plain matter-of-fact was before her. There was no fear of God before their eyes, there was no love and zeal for God in their hearts, no remorse for past transgressions, causing disturbance in their consciences. 'What am I to do?' she asked of herself; and she answered at once to herself, 'Why, I am not to show an angry, contemptuous, self-confident disapprobation; and thus commit sin myself by the spirit and manner with which I condemn sin in others. And one thing I ought to bear in mind,' she said, meekly, 'that if I had not been early taken away from the associations and temptations with which they have been surrounded since my dear mother's death, I might have been now as unconcerned and as regardless a sabbath-breaker as any of them. What am I to do? Surely, I am to pray for more and more of the spirit of the holy Job: the spirit with which he acted when we are told that "it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."' Job i. 5. While these thoughts passed across her mind, she availed herself of a short interval of retirement that she might seek her God by thought and by prayer. She rose from her knees strengthened and comforted, as the gentle voice of Margaret at her door called her to come down to supper.

'Well, Katharine, what think you of our parson?' was the

first inquiry. 'Can any one suppose that he was justified in bringing such subjects into the pulpit? I call it degrading to the dignity of the pulpit. I like to hear the gospel as well as most people; but if I am to be told that to preach a bitter attack upon the innocent recreation of a newspaper, is preaching the gospel, I've done, I've nothing more to say.'

The easy, good-natured William was deeply affronted, as such persons often are; for the gospel, faithfully preached, is as the well-aimed arrow; it can find its way equally through the tough and leathern hide of the elephant, as through the downy plumage of the dove.

'William,' said his father mildly, but with a voice of decision, 'there are stumbling-blocks in the way of the gospel; and to-night you have heard a faithful servant of God point out those stumbling-blocks. They must be seen and removed, my son, or they will lie as stumbling-blocks in your way to heaven.'

Katharine raised her head with astonishment; a new spirit had come over her father; she saw with surprise how like he was to her uncle; there was the same look of earnest thought as he spoke with the authority of one who knew his own place, and his son's duty to him.

'You are wrong, young man; we have been all wrong; and the minister is right.'

'I doubt it, sir, I doubt it,' replied William.

'You may clear up your doubts, and set yourself right, William, by giving yourself a little trouble. You have your Bible; search it, and judge for yourself whether the good pastor is right or wrong: if his words agree with the word of God, the thing is plain enough, he is right, and you are wrong. Do this before you find fault; do not be so hasty till you clearly understand what you talk about: a wrong judgment on your part, with regard to these matters, may not particu-

larly affect your minister, but may involve the most awful consequences to yourself. They that are of a noble mind will receive the word with all readiness, and they will do as I desire you and your brothers to do, that is, to search the Scriptures also, to learn whether the things preached in the pulpit are the same that are written in the book.' William now stared with astonishment, as well as Katharine: such a rebuke given with such self-possessed authority and decision, and yet with so much mildness, was quite new to him from his father's lips; he said no more. If his father chose to get so warm upon the subject he could not help it! He was not going to be put out of his way! He rose, and took up his hat. Margaret caught her brother's hand, and went with him, but only to return hanging on his arm, and saying, 'My brother William stays at home to-night; for once he gives up reading his paper and meeting his friends at the Crown. I know it is not to please me, but Katharine, for he knows well enough what my dear sister's wishes are on the subject.'

'I tell you what, Katharine,' said Harry, 'if your arrival had not been so late as last night, I should have accused you and Mr. Wynter of having a plot between you. It was strange enough that he should show us all up in a sermon, just as if you had written him a letter to tell him what had been going on in this house. He really described me to the very life, ransacking the newspaper and tired of it, and yet reading all the advertisements rather than put it down; while the Bible, to my shame be it spoken, was lying close at hand unopened. But really and seriously, Katharine, I wish you would not interfere so much with what can concern you so very little. If we have the bad taste to prefer a foolish newspaper to a good book, what can it signify to you? There is a saying, that those who come to Rome, should do as Rome does; but

you, on the contrary, come to turn the ways of Rome upside down. I do not like it, and so I tell you plainly. Our ways are the pleasantest, though yours may be right.'

'Not the pleasantest, at any rate,' said Katharine: 'I think you must agree that I have not been thrown out of a gig at the risk of my life, and have now to pay a large sum for the fall into the bargain. Believe me, those who lead the life that you are leading,—I am not speaking too strongly when I say this,—must, if they go on in their ungodliness, realize the words of the apostle, "Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known," Rom. iii. 16, 17. O Harry, have done with this bantering, I beseech you; and when you speak of serious things, speak at least in a serious manner. Treat such subjects with becoming reverence and decency.'

'My dear and honoured father,' she continued, looking up at him beseechingly, 'may I speak without giving offence, or being thought to set myself up as a judge, or a censor, or as better than any of you? Nay, speak I must, for I dare not be silent; I cannot leave you for the night, not knowing whether we may ever meet again on this side the grave, without imploring you to put an end at once and for ever to the present habits of the house. You know that it was not always thus. I well remember how the Lord's day was spent in this family when my dear mother was among us. I told you last night how happy, how very happy I was in your affection, and so I am: but to-night I cannot tell you how very, very unhappy I am. I cannot leave you, and yet I could not bear existence if I were forced to be the constant witness of the present ways of these dear brothers. It is best that I should speak out at once. Oh, I am grateful to God for that sermon! The minister traced the evil, which is I find so common not only in this house but everywhere, to the influence of those

most ungodly newspapers, and I am sure he spoke the truth; yes, the riddle is now solved. I have long wondered, from your letters, what it was that had been gradually working such a change among you; why, and how, the spirituality of your views and sentiments had dwindled away; how the warmth and zeal of your love to God had grown so cold. The mystery is over! What I have seen to-day in this house, what I have heard to-night from that pulpit, has made the cause of this change plain enough. I now clearly understand that the Sunday newspaper has been allowed to supersede, and at last quite to set aside the Holy Bible. The Sunday newspaper has been here, as elsewhere, sapping and undermining the godliness, and, of course, as a natural consequence, the eternal happiness of the family. It has robbed you of sabbath peace here; it will keep you for ever from sabbath glory hereafter. Oh, that my dear mother were still here to plead with you, and to lay her gentle commands upon her sons! Dear William, how well I remember you and Harry kneeling together beside her, while she taught you to pray, that you might learn to love the will and the word and the day of God. And how well I remember her assembling us together on the Lord's day, with little Margaret, then an infant, on her knee, and singing with us till she had taught us to sing that lovely hymn, which begins with "This is the day when Christ arose." What would she say, if she could witness the blight which has fallen upon the beautiful blossoms of those early days of promise! I think, father, it would almost break her heart to feel that her children had grown up to that age when they are beyond parental control, and that all her lessons had been so utterly forgotten! Oh, little did I think to find things come to such a pass as this, when I looked back upon such sabbath order and such holy peace!'

Katharine said no more. She sat quite still, and they wondered why she had stopped so abruptly. She could not speak; and this they perceived when they saw her face bathed in tears, and heard the sound of her weeping. Thoughtless and full of levity as he appeared to be, Harry was the first to speak, and he threw off at once all his usual lightness of manner.

'Whatever the others may say, I have made up my mind; Katharine is right, and I promise to give up my present ways, and at least to try to return to the paths from which I have gone astray. You must help me, dear sister,' he said, going up to Katharine, and affectionately kissing her cheek; 'you must take my mother's place, for you are as like her in mind as you are in person. You are quite right about the newspapers, and so is Mr. Wynter, and I give up at once all my illiberal abuse of him. She is right, is she not, William?'

He received no answer from William but by a silent nod, for, as Margaret afterwards told her sister, she had seen one large tear after another rise into his eyes, and then course itself down his face while Katharine was speaking of his mother; and though he would not take out his handkerchief, she added, he covered his eyes with his hand till his fingers were quite wet.

But the person most affected by Katharine's affectionate appeal was her father, and he spoke not only of their unholy disregard of the Lord's day, but he also called them to be the witnesses of his mind on another subject.

'You have been all struck by the sermon,' said the gentle old man, 'but none of you have felt its force and truth and application more than I have; yet there was one part of the service to-day, which has been still more deeply impressed on my mind; and I trust that my heart, under that portion of God's word, has been turned as clay to the seal: I speak of the

first lesson which was read to us. I received there at once my condemnation and my command—my condemnation for past transgression, my command for my future conduct. My children, a cruel father have I been to you. I have not only sinned as Eli sinned; his remonstrances were faint and useless, but such as they were he made them. I have not done even this. I have allowed myself to sanction, by my own criminal practice, your sin of sabbath-breaking; but it is not, I trust, too late even for me to change. From henceforth I will maintain my place and my authority over my own household where God has placed me, and there will I act for him till you lay my gray hairs in the grave.'

There was so much of that wisdom which is gentle and easy to be entreated in the words of the old man, so much of decision, and yet of sweetness and affection, that his words entered into the hearts of all his children. He continued, 'Need I say after this, that as the head and master of my family I forbid once and for ever the bringing in, or reading of a Sunday newspaper, or any newspaper on the Lord's day among us. I am sure I shall not speak in vain to any of you.'

'And need I assure you,' said William, rising up with a look and voice in which respect and affection were blended, 'as your eldest son, in the name of each and all of your children, that from this moment this your command shall be sacred among us, and in obeying you, we shall feel assured that we are paying the obedience to God which has been too long withheld. We have indeed reason to bless him for having this day brought our sin to our remembrance, and enabled us to see the danger we were in, while there was yet time to escape from it; and the instrument that he has used is the most welcome one. We shall never, I trust, forget the circumstances which have attended the return to the bosom of her own family of our dear Katharine.'

My reader, it is not unlikely that the pages you have now read may come home to your own conscience. I may have been describing your own ways, and the ways of your household. Give the subject your serious consideration, to see if there are truth and justice in my remarks; and if you should find that I am right, then surely you will determine to do the thing that is right with all your heart.

THE PASSWORD.

'The Precious Blood of Christ.'—1 PETER i. 19.

TWO soldiers were strolling along under the noble trees which partly surround the Alameda at Gibraltar. Their duties for the day were over, and they were quietly conversing together, as they walked, enjoying the grateful shade, and the pleasant breeze which blew freshly from the sea. They were both young men, frank and intelligent. Although they had already been associated with many of the corruptions to which a military life is exposed, the influence of their early home-training was still strong upon them, and they had been drawn to one another by a fellow-feeling on many subjects.

'This is a beautiful place,' said Angus Fletcher, 'and I am greatly taken with it. I had long wished to see foreign

parts, and I have had my wish; but after all, Singleton, there is no place like one's own home. It's quite true, at least I find it to be true to my own feeling, what the poet Burns, once a farm-labourer like myself, has said—

> "Their groves of sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
> Where bright beaming summers exalt the perfume;
> Far dearer to me yon lone glen o'green breckan,
> Wi' the burn stealing under the long yellow broom."'

'I feel much like you, my friend,' said Singleton. 'I longed to see foreign lands, and I am not disappointed, but pleased and gratified with all that I have seen. What an awful grandeur there is about this huge pile of rock! and how soft and bright are the flowers and fruits around! But among all these strange and beautiful trees and flowers, these hedges of geraniums, and that grove of orange trees with their ripe fruit and sweet blossoms, I too have yearnings of heart for home—for the green meadows and the hawthorn hedges and the old oaks of my own country village.'

'Ah! I wonder what they are doing now in our dear old place,' said Angus. 'Let me see—it's Wednesday evening, and my mother and sisters must have come in from milking, and made themselves ready some half-an-hour ago to attend the prayer-meeting at the school-room; and there, my honoured father may be now lifting up his heart in prayer. It always did me good to hear him: there was such a grave, solemn reverence even in the tone of his voice, and his prayer was so plain—such a simple asking of God—that I always listened with a loving and admiring heart. I wish I could have joined from my heart; but I am sorry to own that my heart was given to other things. I was restless and uneasy at home; I could never settle down to the plough, or to the homestead; and, though I felt some pleasure in rambling over the moors

and mountain-side in charge of the sheep, I wished for a more stirring life.

'There was an old soldier, a cousin of my father's, who lived on his pension in our village, and often took his seat in our chimney corner. He had been a sergeant in a highland regiment, had seen much service, and been badly wounded: we were never tired of hearing the stories which he was never tired of telling. They took such hold of me, that I longed for a life of adventures in foreign lands; and here I am, happy enough, but with many a longing for home, notwithstanding.'

'And I,' said Singleton, 'had a happy home, and the kindest and best of mothers.' He sighed deeply.

But here his attention was caught by the sight of a man at a short distance from them. They had not noticed him before, but he had been observing them, as he sat, half-hidden by part of the rock and the broad leaves of a spreading fig-tree, near them. His pack, which he had thrown off, lay beside him, and he had risen, and now stood before the two young soldiers. He was a remarkable man; the flashing light of his dark eyes, and the calm, firm expression of his closed lips, told of a character at once full of energy and of decision. For a few moments he did not speak. He was reading with rapid glances the faces of the two young men. He liked what he saw—the open intelligent looks and the good-tempered expression.

'I wonder,' said the stranger, 'if you would buy what I have to sell.' He spoke in English, and with a voice frank and hearty in its tones. The voice and the face of the speaker were both pleasant, and they were right glad to find that, though his skin was dark as a Spaniard's, he was an Englishman, and spoke in the well-known words of their own native English tongue.

'And what may you have to sell?' asked Angus. 'Is it anything likely to suit me and my comrade?'

'Yes, that it is, my lad; I can offer to each of you a sword of priceless value. I may say of it what David of old said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that."'

'A sword,' said Singleton, with a look of grave perplexity; 'I do not understand you; but can you let us see the sword you speak of? Have you it at hand?'

'Indeed I have,' he answered. 'I am a travelling armourer, and carry these weapons of war with me.'

'I'm thinking you are a strange man,' said Fletcher, smiling, 'and your speech is a parable.'

'It is so, my young friend,' said the stranger; 'but I have high authority for using similitudes. The sword I would offer you is not an earthly weapon, it is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God—a weapon, mighty through God, even in a child's hand. Will you let me furnish you with a Bible?' He spoke with an earnest gravity. 'You do not reply,' he added, after a pause; 'perhaps you each already possess a Bible: I hope you do.'

Neither of the young men did possess a Bible, but they did not like to say so: perhaps for the first time they felt ashamed that they were without the word of God. But whatever they felt, they both eagerly expressed their desire to purchase the sacred volume.

'Will you read the book, my friends, or rather will you search it? The great Captain who provided this wondrous weapon, gave it to be used, not to lie in the scabbard.'

'I think I can answer for my comrade, and I am sure I do so most willingly for myself,' replied Angus.

'Say, God helping me,' exclaimed the pedler, turning his head and looking up from his pack. He was kneeling down and had begun to unclasp the straps.

'You are right,' said Angus, gravely; 'my honoured father would have said the same; you remind me of him, and your words recall his words. I well remember now, that he never opened the Bible to read in our family worship without offering up a prayer. His words were few, but what a solemn, humble spirit there was in those few words!' Angus knew not that while he was thus speaking, the man whom he had likened to his father was also lifting up his heart in silent earnest prayer for him and his young companion—prayer that the God and Giver of all grace might bless his own word to the souls of those two youthful soldiers, and that the word of truth and life might commend itself to the conscience of each of them. That colporteur, or pedler, was well fitted for the office he had undertaken. He was a man of prayer: this was his chief qualification. No copy of the word of God, which he went from place to place to distribute, ever passed from his hand without a prayer for him in whose hand it was placed. He had energy, wisdom, great knowledge of character, a spirit that nothing seemed to daunt, and a temper that was never ruffled; he had hope, patience, perseverance, and a heart glowing with love to his divine Master, and to all his fellow-men; but he was especially a man of prayer—prayer which sprang from strong faith; and he doubted not but that his prayer would be answered: he believed that God's word would never return to him void.

He had begun indeed to feel a deep and peculiar interest in those two young soldiers, and he could not depart without saying a few more words of affectionate counsel to them.

'Do not take this sacred book in a careless, light-minded spirit,' he said; 'do not forget whose word it is. I would rather not part with a single copy to those who will not value it. It is the greatest treasure that man ever possessed,

and those who have not known this in their health, have awaked to feel their need of it, when the time came to leave this world. I heard lately that an officer, now an elderly man, retired from the service, has distributed a great many Bibles among soldiers, and that he gave this affecting reason for what he did :—

'In one of the battles which were fought in Spain during the Peninsular war, his intimate friend, a young officer like himself, was struck down by his side. His wound was mortal, and he had but a short time to live. He was carried to the rear, and when his friend was able to seek him, he found him dying. "I want a Bible," were his first words to his friend. "Oh let me have a Bible ; I intreat you to bring me a Bible." His friend hastened instantly to seek for one. He went from tent to tent; he sought everywhere for a Bible, but he sought in vain : not a single copy of the precious volume was to be found throughout the whole camp. He came back to his expiring friend with a heavy heart, for he came without the word of God. He was unable to read a word of hope and comfort to support the fainting spirit of the dying man. Whether he was himself able to point out to him the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for sinners, even the chief, I know not: but this I know, that the word of life could not be procured, and was not brought to comfort the expiring soul of that poor young officer.

'Think of that dying soldier, my young friends, whenever you feel inclined to neglect, or to put off reading the holy Scriptures. Search it—now, while the opportunity is yours; while you have time, while you have health, search the Scriptures. You may be laid low among the dying and the dead upon the field; that trying hour may come to one or both of you; but before it comes, make yourselves well acquainted with the living and eternal truths of this wonder-

ful book. Do what you can to strengthen one another; that is, if you both make up your minds to accept the free salvation which God offers you through his dear Son, and to live to Him who gave his life a ransom for yours; for if we say that we know him, we ought also to walk, even as he walked. You are friends already, or I am much mistaken; learn to be friends by a far higher bond of union than that of any earthly friendship. You may each of you be a great help to the other; for as the wise man says in this book, "Two are better than one." Consider the advice I have given you both, in my plain way. I have a strong faith that God will not let my words fall to the ground. I believe that he will bless us when we are found doing the right thing in the best way that we are able, and I know that I am doing the right thing by both of you.

'I am going forward on my way,' he added; 'I must bid you both farewell. I may never see your faces again on earth, but I pray that I may see the face of each of you in rest. You have a world of evil and temptation before you, but if you will but look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek him like men in earnest, he will never leave you nor forsake you. Learn to be soldiers in a double sense; not only under the royal standard of your sovereign, and under your commanding officer in the fort, and under the standard of the King of kings, but under the great Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is another similitude which is presented to me by the very spot on which we are now standing. We are here upon the famous rock of Gibraltar, the strongest fortress in the world. The soldier on this rock knows that he is safe, though beset and attacked on all sides by thousands and ten thousands of armed troops. Let the thought of this rock, which is after all but a rock of earth, raise your thoughts to Christ; learn to say of him with the psalmist, "Thou art

my rock and my fortress."* "Neither is there any rock like our God."† My young friends, these are my parting words to each of you; this is the prayer of my heart for both of you—that you may learn from the word of life and truth which I have put into your hands, to bear this testimony to your most good and gracious God: He has brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, even out of the pit of destruction, and out of the mire of worldly and sensual corruptions. He has set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.' The pedler said no more; tears stood in his eyes, and his voice trembled as he ceased speaking. With a hearty grasp he shook the hands of the two young soldiers, threw his pack over his shoulder, and walked rapidly away.

'God for ever bless that man!' said Angus Fletcher, as he stood intently looking after him, till the tall strong figure of the stranger was no longer to be seen.

'He is no common character,' observed Walter; 'I shall never forget him, nor the words he has spoken to us. I say not only, God bless him, but God grant that his wishes and prayer for you and me may be answered.'

'I feel as if they were already answered in my case,' replied Fletcher. 'I have made up my mind, God helping me, to try to serve God from my heart, and to search the Bible, that I may know how to serve him. You must help me, my friend. Will you do the same? Will you serve God, and so help me to serve him? What say you to this, Singleton?'

'I say that you are right, and that I will try to do as you have resolved to do; but I shall need your help, Fletcher, far more than you can need mine. These things are not altogether new and strange to you, it seems; but they are nearly so to me. You can look back to a pious father's teaching, and to

* Psalm lxxi. 3. † 1 Sam. ii. 2.

his good example. Such a home as yours is not rare, I have heard, in Scotland. I, too, have had many advantages, but my conscience reproaches me with the way in which I have undervalued and abused them. I am sure that you can help me. I have had a good education, perhaps better than your own; but as to religion I am almost as ignorant as a child. I do earnestly hope that God will enable me to be as humble as a child.'

'Well, my friend,' replied Angus, affectionately, 'we will do our best to help one another. "Two are better than one," as the stranger said. Let us each try to remember all that he said to us, and think over it, and not stop there; let us pray about it when we are alone, and then try to pray together. My dear father often took me apart, when I was a boy, and prayed about the word which we had heard together from our good old minister in the kirk. There is a prayer meeting,' he added, 'as you know, among a few men of our regiment, and sergeant Murray, a countryman of mine, conducts it. He has a stern, hard look, and I never liked him; but that, I dare say, has been my fault, not his; he is much respected by the men, and he is a brave old fellow, and has seen much service. I have often envied him his Waterloo medal. What say you, Walter? shall we go to that prayer meeting?'

'With all my heart,' replied Singleton; 'when is it?'

'That we may soon find out; I've a notion it's to-morrow night, about this hour. We will go together.'

The prayer meeting was held on the following evening. Ten or twelve soldiers had met together; some of them staid elderly veterans, two or three young bright-looking men, but every countenance wore a calm yet thoughtful expression. They looked like what they were—men thoroughly in earnest about the one chief concern of an immortal being; and they had met together in the name of that glorious and gracious

Lord, trusting to his promise, that He will be in the midst of such disciples. Not many words were spoken, but there was the silent greeting of a firm grasp of the hand, as one after another they came in. Two young men made their appearance there for the first time that evening. Sergeant Murray fixed his eyes upon them as they entered. He said nothing, but Angus thought that he must have before mistaken the expression of his countenance when he deemed it hard and stern; for now, while he regarded it more attentively, it seemed as mild as it was grave. He gave out a hymn, and it was sung by those manly voices, with a spirit which seemed to spring from their very souls. Angus had often heard the tune; it was one of the fine old psalm tunes of his native country, and, though he was no singer, he lifted up his voice with all his heart. Walter had a good ear and a fine voice; and after the first verse he was able to join in the solemn melody.

The hymn was one that found a response in the feelings of the two young soldiers.

'People of the living God,
I have sought the world around;
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,
Peace and comfort nowhere found.
Now to you my spirit turns,
Turns a fugitive unbless'd;
Brethren, where your altar burns,
Oh, receive me into rest.

'Lonely I no longer roam,
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave.
Where you dwell shall be my home,
Where you die shall be my grave;
Mine the God whom you adore,
Your Redeemer shall be mine;
Earth can fill my heart no more,
Every idol I resign.

'Tell me not of gain or loss,
Ease, enjoyment, pomp, or power;
Welcome poverty and cross,
Shame, reproach, affliction's hour:
Follow me! I know thy voice,
Jesus, Lord, thy steps I see,
Now I take thy yoke by choice,
Light thy burden now to me.'

A few verses were read at the 13th chapter of Romans, from the 12th verse: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' A short prayer was then offered up, with a grave and earnest voice and a manner full of deep reverence, by one of the elder men present. Then the Bible was again opened, and a few more verses of holy Scripture were read by sergeant Murray at the 9th chapter of 1st Epistle to the Corinthians from the 24th verse: 'Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' He closed the book, and then called upon a young man to pray, who was almost a stranger to Walter and Angus.

The simplicity and fervour of this young man's prayer, coming fresh from the very heart, went home to the hearts of Angus and Walter: they saw that he who was leading their

prayers was about their own age, and they felt that many of the same thoughts which were in their hearts were also in his, many of their wants were his, their desires his, nay, many of his words were the very words they would have wished to use, as expressing what was passing within their own hearts. He was more advanced in the way in which they had but just entered, and he was therefore enabled to lead them onward, and to teach them, while he prayed, things that before they knew not. Tears rose to the eyes of Angus, for his feelings were more easily excited than those of his friend. There were no tears in Walter's eyes, no signs of outward agitation; but his spirit was stirred within him to its very depths. He said nothing, but the settled gravity of his look and manner told as plainly as the emotion of Angus what was felt within.

That change indeed had begun to take place which is of God, which none but God can produce, for it is only wrought by the Holy Spirit, and it is like the change of the wind, which bloweth where it listeth; it is often as instantaneous as a change of wind, and as independent of the power of man. It was indeed a day of small things with those young men; but when the precious seed is sown in the heart, prepared like the good ground to receive it; and when the germ of life wakes into life and stirs and swells within that precious seed, then it will surely grow and spring up, and shoot forth, 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.'

Such was the state of these two young soldiers: they were, as afterwards was surely proved, subjects of that Divine and transforming change, which the natural man cannot comprehend; which the world knoweth not, because it seeth it not, and which it often scorns and despises as foolishness. But the holy apostle propounds a great truth when he affirms that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know

them, because they are spiritually discerned;'* and when he also writes, 'If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise;'† for we know this, if we know anything of spiritual truth and spiritual life, that the 'foolishness of God is wiser than men.'‡

Angus Fletcher and Walter Singleton were no longer to be found among their former companions at the taverns of the town, or among the loungers or drinkers, wasting their time on the benches, with a pipe or a cigar in their lips, reading or listening to some soiled newspaper, and eagerly, or languidly, (as the mood might be), discussing some point of politics or some stale police report. When not on duty or on parade, their habits of life were changed. Sometimes together, sometimes alone, they climbed the steep upward paths of the rock, and spent many a quiet profitable hour in some distant and secluded spot, searching that book of unspeakable value, which they had lately learned to prize as their chief treasure. They searched that blessed book earnestly, anxiously, yet joyfully, with persevering diligence and humble prayer, and they soon began to realize the gracious promise: 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart;' they searched for hidden treasure, they dug deep for it, and they had learned that in that holy ground, as in the mines of the earth, surely there is a vein for the silver and a place for gold: and no miner ever searched more anxiously for the vein of gold in the caverns of the rock, than did these two young soldiers for the treasure hid in the field of sacred Scripture.

Both perhaps were alike in earnestness, but there was more of depth and power in the mind of Walter than in that of his friend. Angus, however, seemed to make most progress, for having been brought up in a godly household, the good seed

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † 1 Cor. iii. 18. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 25.

quickly came up which had been sown early in his heart, though it had lain there long dormant.

The two friends were sitting on a lofty platform of the mountain rock: beneath them lay the calm broad expanse of the Mediterranean, flushed with the same rich glow of crimson and gold, which had spread over the clear heaven above them. The day had been hot and sultry, but an evening of exquisite clearness had succeeded, and no sound but the faint dash of the waves far, far beneath, and the light rustle of the freshly-blowing breeze through the fragrant plants which covered the rock around them, broke upon the stillness. They had chosen a spot where the shadow of the towering heights formed a screen from the slanting rays of the sun. 'Our friend the colporteur,' said Angus, 'would have pointed out a similitude in that huge mass of the rock which now shelters us. He would have told us that the Lord Jesus Christ is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. How pleasant it is, my friend, after the closeness and heat of the day, to come to such a spot as this, when the fresh breeze has sprung up, and to converse together. How happy we are, Walter; and what cause we have for thankfulness to God for putting it into the heart of that godly colporteur to offer us his Bibles, and to speak to us in the way he did. I have been thinking, since our last meeting together, that he was like John the Baptist, pointing out Jesus Christ to his disciples as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and that you and I are like the two disciples who, when they heard him speak, followed Jesus. Yes,' he added—he suddenly stopped, and a look of thoughtful gravity came over his face—but then he smiled, and looking into his friend's face, said, 'We may say also we have found the Messiah, which is the Christ.' Walter did not smile, did not reply; and Angus, as he now looked more earnestly at him, saw that his eye

were filled with tears, and that there was an expression of deep sadness on the countenance of his friend.

'You are happy, Angus,' he said, with a low voice, 'and I thank God that you are so; but I am miserable. Would to God I could say with you, "I have found the Christ." Alas! I should rather say, "I sought him, but I found him not." I cannot say that I do not believe, for indeed I do; but I am sorely tried by doubts and fears. My sins I know are great and many, but my heart is too hard to feel as I ought to feel about them, and yet,' he added, in a lower tone, 'I hate them —God knows I hate them—and I loathe myself for having ever loved them. Why cannot I cast them off? Why do I doubt the grace and love of God through Jesus Christ? Why do I doubt his love to me? You must pray for me, my friend.'

'Will I not pray for you?' he replied, grasping his friend's hand; 'yes, and with a full confidence that doubts and fears will pass away in God's good time. When the sun comes forth in the heavens, the mists and fogs which lie heavy on the pastures of the valley melt away, and the whole face of the country is bright and smiling with the clear sunshine. So will it be with you. One thing, however, you cannot deny, sorrowful as you are. You have followed Christ as sincerely as I have, since he was pointed out to us by the colporteur. Is it not so, my dear fellow? Are you not in downright earnest? Would you go back to your old ways?'

'No, no, not if I go mourning all my days. If I am nothing else, I am sincere, I am in earnest, Angus.'

The eyes of Angus were just then drawn to the tall figure of a soldier who was approaching the spot where they sat; as he came nearer, they saw that it was sergeant Murray, and they could not but admire the firm and active steps of the spare, old, weather-beaten soldier. They were glad to see

him, and returned with warmth the hearty shake of the hand that he gave them.

'You see, my lads, I keep my promise. You said you would like me to join you some evening, and here I am.'

The godly sergeant had felt an interest in the two young men since the first evening when they joined the prayer meeting. He had kept his eye upon them, and marked with great approval their quiet and consistent conduct. He had become their friend, and was sincerely attached to them. They were soon in close and earnest conversation.

Sergeant Murray was a man of plain strong sense and of deep feeling, and he was an experienced and established Christian. He commanded the respect of all his mere acquaintances, he won the love of those who knew him well. He was not a man of many words, but he was a close observer, and possessed a keen insight into character. He soon discovered something of the state of mind of each of his young companions, enough, indeed, to serve as a clew to lead him further. He knew that they were young and inexperienced in the things of God, and he sincerely wished to be of use to them. He won their confidence, and they felt that they had found a friend who could enter into their feelings, and help them in their difficulties. They were indeed astonished at the gentleness and kindness of the man, whom they had regarded, but a short time before, as one of the sternest men in their regiment. His kindness of heart was peculiarly displayed towards Walter.

Angus had quitted them, for he was to be on guard that night, and the sergeant and Walter remained together. Angus was glad to leave them, for Walter had hitherto said little of his inward trial, his state of anxious wretchedness. Angus hoped that after he was gone, Walter might be led to cast off his reserve, and state his difficulties to one so well able as the

sergeant was, to direct and to encourage him. And so it came to pass; he gradually opened his whole heart to his godly and experienced companion.

The sergeant heard him without interruption, and, after he had ceased speaking, he said, '"God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." Paul wrote thus to the church of God at Rome. Do you believe his inspired testimony?'

'I do believe it with my whole heart,' replied Angus.

'Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ, my friend?'

'Yes, yes,' said Walter: his voice was deep and low, but there was the earnestness of strong feeling in every tone, 'I love him better than life.'

'You believe and you love, and yet you are unhappy.'

A deep sigh was at first the only response. 'I am very unhappy,' he said, at length. 'He knows, who only knows my heart, how willing I am, how I long to embrace the gracious offers of the gospel. It is not that I will not, but I cannot believe that my sins are forgiven. I have no sense of a particular interest in the forgiveness of my own sin, and of my acceptance with God.'

The sergeant took his hymn book from his pocket and said, 'Will you read, if only the two first verses of this hymn?' Walter read them aloud,

'I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answer'd prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.'

'Whose state does this describe, my young friend?'

'It is thus with me, almost exactly thus,' he replied; 'and I

will pray for grace to wait patiently for the joy and the peace in believing which I long for.'

But here the sergeant raised the telescope, which he always carried with him, to his eye. He seemed for some little time intently observing some object upon the surface of the waves. 'Yes,' he murmured to himself, 'it is the same;' then turning to Walter, he said, 'Do you see that boat, how swiftly and steadily it speeds upon its way before the wind, its sails swelled and its bright little streamer floating forth upon the breeze? It was but two hours ago, that I stood upon the shore observing that same boat; it lay there rocking to and fro, its mast hoisted, but its sails hanging loosely; all, however, was in order, all prepared for sailing; the owner of the little craft was there, and another man was with him; they were watching for the first breath of the favourable wind. It had not come when I stood by them on the shore, yet nothing had been neglected—all was in exact order, everything had been prepared for sailing. But the wind is not at man's command; it bloweth where it listeth, and till it comes the mariner must wait. If, however, he would be benefited by it when it comes, he must be found like the master of that little boat—watching for it, and waiting with everything about him prepared, and in readiness to avail himself of the welcome change. There is a lesson for you, my young friend, in all this; tell me what it is.'

'Is it not, that I am now like the bark upon the shore, and that I am as entirely dependent upon the Lord God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, as the mariner is for the breeze to fill his sails, and speed him on his voyage? Is it not that I must wait, and watch as well as wait?'

'You are right, my friend, you must wait, and you must watch as well as wait; and even as the mariner had made every preparation—had done everything on his part, and

neglected nothing—so you must use all the means of grace, and still wait for God's good time, for it will surely come. See how the bark bounds forward on its way. Its swelling sails will soon be out of sight. My friend, hear what the psalmist has said regarding his own experience of the merciful kindness of the Lord to them that wait for him: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." * You are now in heaviness, but there is, doubtless, a "needs be" for it; and be assured of this, that in His own good time you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

A week passed away; another came, and passed. The two young soldiers were making a quiet, steady progress in the path they had entered; they had become pilgrims in that narrow path. One went on his way rejoicing; the other, though he walked side by side with him, was still a mourner; the one walked in light, the other walked in darkness. His was no uncommon case. There are few of God's children who have not met with such cases, if they have not themselves been for awhile in darkness, when they became disciples of Christ. And thus also it pleased God to bruise their Lord and Master, and to put him to grief; and thus it is written,† that 'we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' But there is a word of Divine consolation to such mourners: 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.' ‡

* Psalm xl. 1—3. † Acts xiv. 22.

‡ Isaiah l. 10.

The shades of night were falling fast, for the sun had gone down. In the deep calm of that evening hour scarcely a sound was heard but the soft murmurs of the tideless sea, and the measured tread of the sentinel, as he paced to and fro before the entrance of the sallyport. The sentinel was Angus, for he was that night on guard. But his last occupation before he took his place as a watcher, had been reading his Bible. The book had been left; but one passage of its Divine pages had been received as an engrafted word into his heart. It was from the 1st Epistle of Peter, chap. i., at the 18th and the 19th verses. 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' He thought of his former conversation. Vain it had been indeed, a course of vanity, and foolishness, and sin; and he had been as one having no hope, and without God in the world; all had been vanity and vexation of spirit. But now his heart was filled with joy and peace. He thought of the price that had been paid—'*The precious blood of Christ.*' Here it was that his soul rested; on those words his thoughts settled, his affections clung, and with those words the prayers of his adoring heart rose in silent, fervent prayer to his Father in heaven. He knew, he felt, that with such a plea, vile and guilty as he was in himself, he might come boldly to the throne of grace, and find acceptance from Him who sits upon the throne; for there in the midst of the throne He stands, like unto a lamb newly slain, even Jesus, who was dead and is alive again, who hath 'loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.'

A step was heard; the watchful sentinel heard it. He had become doubly careful to attend to his duty since he had become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The step was not that of a

stranger, but of a young officer of his own regiment. He was passing hastily to the fort, for he was late. Turning to the sentinel, but without stopping, he called out as he passed, 'Give me the password,'—he had himself forgotten it. But though Angus was now watchfully awake to the duties of his calling, one subject was uppermost in his inward thoughts; and he replied to the question of the young officer, '*The precious blood of Christ.*' The officer stopped; and Angus, instantly aware of the mistake he had made, apologized and gave the right password. The officer walked on, and the sound of his footsteps soon died away. But those inspired words, which perchance left no impression on the mind of that officer, except as a strange mistake of the sentinel, and then passed away to be no more regarded, had been borne as with the wings of a dove into the troubled anxious heart of another hearer. Hidden by the increasing gloom of the night, but not far from the spot, Walter stood leaning against the wall, unnoticed by his friend. The darkness was still upon his soul.

He was as one who longed for the day. He looked for light, but no light came. But he had not forgotten the wise and godly counsel of the sergeant, and perhaps he was thinking of the little boat which had lain moored to the shore at no great distance from the spot where he then stood—its mast hoisted, its drooping sails unfurled, ready to catch the first breathings of the favourable breeze.

He heard the step of the officer breaking upon the hushed silence of the night. He heard the words, 'Give me the password;' he heard, but scarcely heeded those words: but when the silence was again broken by the voice that answered, '*The precious blood of Christ,*' it was as if an angel had spoken to him from heaven; a thrill of joy shot through his whole frame—joy so exquisite, so overpowering, that for some moments he felt as if he hardly knew where he was. 'This is

what I want,' he cried, with trembling delight; 'this is the password, O Lord, to thy kingdom; this is the password—the only password—for me, and for every poor miserable sinner. I can understand, I can feel, I can believe, I can trust. But it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

He had begun to experience the blessedness of that state of which the apostle speaks, when he says, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;'* and he could say with regard to his own case, 'I know that He is faithful that promised.' Those blessed words, '*The precious blood of Christ*,' might be no password into the fortress of the earthly rock, but they were the password to his immortal soul into the fortress of the Rock of Ages.

Alas! there are some of my readers who will not understand this, the one chief point of my story—and yet they bear the name of Christians. It will be to them, I am well aware, as foolishness—'Doth he not speak parables?' said the unbelieving Jews, when the prophet spoke to them of the purposes of God. Such was the case with many who were numbered among God's people in old times; and wherefore *entered they not in?* Because of unbelief; not the unbelief of the young soldier, which was no wilful unbelief, but the unbelief of those to whom Christ said, 'Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life.' 'They loved darkness rather than light.'

'Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' The precious blood of Christ, poured out upon the cross—these are subjects which have always been a stumbling-block and foolishness to the

* Heb. x. 19—23.

world and the worldly-minded, whether among nominal Christians or the heathen; yet He is the only way, and his precious blood the only password by which the guilty, godless sinner can obtain an entrance into the kingdom of God.

'*The precious blood of Christ*' is a subject of the deepest interest to every sinful child of man, for '*The blood is the life.*' The blood of the body is a living agent by which the life of the body is sustained. When the blood ceases to circulate the body dies. The blood of the bodily man has been therefore made by our God the type of the life of the spiritual part of man. That life has departed from man since the sin and fall of our first parents, and it is only by the blood of our Divine Redeemer shed upon the cross, that it can be restored to any man. 'God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;' 'He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life;' and His *blood* freely shed for us, (that is, his life,) is life given by his death, and is our life. May that life, my reader, if you are yet *dead—dead* in trespasses and sins, DEAD before God—be applied by the Holy Spirit to your deadness, that you may, by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, be alive unto God! It is the office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to us; to take of his blood, even his life, and apply it to give life to our souls. God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. May you ask him in the name of his dear Son, and he will assuredly give that gracious gift unto you.

Soldiers, this is especially addressed to you. For you these pages were written, with the earnest desire to set plainly before you the Way, the Truth, and the Life—even the Lord Jesus Christ, who has said, 'No man cometh to the Father, but by me.' The precious blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. The precious blood of Christ is the only ransom for perishing

souls, the only PASSWORD to the kingdom of heaven. For you, my brave, much tried, and much enduring friends and fellow-countrymen, the words I have written are put forth, with earnest prayers from my heart that the Lord God will send down his grace, and his blessing with them, and that you may be taught of him by the Holy Spirit to believe, with a full confiding trust, in Jesus Christ and him crucified; for to them that believe he is precious, his death precious, and his blood (that is, his life) poured forth, precious. The story of the Password is no fiction, but a fact; and I could tell you more of him who found those words, 'The precious blood of Christ,' his password to the kingdom of God. He was then a soldier like yourselves, a private soldier; he afterwards became a minister of the gospel and a translator of the word of God into the language of a heathen people; and a portion of Scripture thus translated by him was blessed to the conversion of a poor sick heathen sailor, on board the Dreadnought hospital in the Thames.

Perhaps, my reader, you are now heedless and lukewarm; so, at one time, was a young officer who fell lately in the Crimea. In his case, also, '*The precious blood of Christ*' was the password into the kingdom of God. He had gone into the tent of a brother officer, and seeing a Bible lie open there, he looked into it. These words met his eye, and arrested his thoughts, '*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*,' 1 John i. 7. He felt that he was a guilty and polluted sinner, and that if he were to die in the state in which he then was, there would be no hope of heaven for him; but God enabled him to receive those precious words into his soul, and to believe with his whole heart in the assurance they conveyed, and he was not afraid to die. He was one of the many victims in the late terrible war, and fell a sacrifice to the mad ambition and evil passions of man. But he was prepared to depart, for he

was always looking unto Jesus, and he believed that the blood of Christ had cleansed him from all sin.

There were indeed good soldiers of Jesus Christ on the dark battle-fields of the Crimea, and among them few more faithful and devoted to the great Captain of their salvation than Captain Hedley Vicars and Lieutenant Anstruther. To both of them to live was Christ, and to die was gain; for their only PASSWORD to the heavenly city was 'THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.'

THE BAR OF IRON;

OR,

UNSANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

A True Story.

'Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!'—HEB. iii. 13.

THERE are few persons who have not made acquaintance with affliction; but there are also few persons who understand the effect produced by affliction upon the heart of man. Affliction is sometimes an instrument in the hand of God, by which his Spirit works a vital change in the heart; but it is the Holy Spirit, not the affliction, that really effects the wondrous transformation. Where affliction is not accompanied by the Spirit of God, the heart of man may be seared, not softened: and this is proved by facts which come daily under our own eyes.

The following story, which is fact, not fiction,

may tend to give a right view of the effect of unsanctified affliction, or, to use the words of Holy Scripture, 'the sorrow of the world.' The impression which it made on my own mind was deep and solemn; and I think it is likely to make the same impression on others. God grant that it may!

The night was dark. Heavy clouds had gathered over the western sky at sunset, and the twilight had ended sooner than usual. The clergyman of a country parish was returning home from a distant part of his extensive and scattered district, when his attention was drawn to the flood of light streaming across the road from the forge of the village blacksmith. He stopped to admire the fine effect produced by the dazzling lights and the heavy shadows in their strong contrasts. The scene before him might have supplied a study for a Rembrandt. The common objects which he had passed unnoticed in the daylight seemed now to be clothed with a mysterious grandeur. The cart-shed opposite the forge stood partly in a blaze of splendour; through the half-open door flashes of brilliant light played here and there upon the chains, and other portions of old harness hanging on the walls, while all beyond was a depth of gloom. But his eyes were drawn to a nobler study within the forge, where the fine features and the athletic frame of the smith, as he stood there glowing with health and vigour, were thrown into strong relief by the glare of light. He thought he had never seen a nobler specimen of an English yeoman than in that man.

Richard Norman was then in the prime of youthful manhood. His countenance wore a fine open expression of intelligence and good temper. His broad chest and firmly knit limbs seemed formed for the exertion and endurance of hard labour. He was in the act of drawing a bar of iron from the furnace, and laying it on the anvil. He raised his powerful arm, and

fast fell the heavy blows of the hammer upon the half-molten bar; and as it lay there, softened and glowing with intense heat, showers of brilliant sparks flew forth on every side. Quickly the bar was turned, and as quickly fell the hammer, while the iron began to change from white to red, and then to lose even its redness, till the heavy blows ceased to fall, and the bar of iron lay cooling and hardening into all its former blackness.

The thoughts of the minister were drawn to higher subjects, while he stood gazing upon the bar of iron, hard and black, as it lay upon the anvil, where it had just before been glowing with heat, and yielding to the blows of the hammer, and scattering its sparks like stars of brilliant light on every side. 'Here is a parable for my consideration,' he said to himself; 'that bar of iron—what an emblem does it present of the natural man when put into the furnace of affliction! How soft and malleable it had become under that fierce and fiery ordeal! How easily it yielded to the heavy blows of the hammer, as it lay upon the anvil glowing with borrowed heat, and sending forth its sparks of borrowed light! But the ordeal is passed, and there it now lies cooling into more than its former hardness—just what it was before—a dark, dull bar of stubborn iron. No glow of vital heat comes from it, now, no spark of light breaks forth. The heaviest blows of that forceful hammer would descend in vain upon it. It might be broken, but it would not bend.'

The minister of Christ passed on, full of such thoughts, and saddened by them as he went. He thought of some of his own beloved flock, whom he had once seen softened, and as he had fondly hoped changed, by a season of deep affliction. They had been softened, but only for a time; and had become more hardened, he feared, than ever. He little thought how forcibly that parable would soon afterwards find its applica-

tion in the very man whose forge and whose work had suggested it.

'Come in, if you please. Oh, is it you, sir? pray come in,' said a young woman of very pleasing appearance, rising respectfully from her seat as the clergyman entered the house; and she placed a chair for him, wiping it with her apron, and begging him to be seated. There was no dust on the chair, or on any article of furniture in that pleasant room; everything was clean and neat and in beautiful order.

'But you must sit down,' he said, smiling, 'if I am to do so. I am come to ask after Richard; I did not see him at church, and as I passed the forge just now, I found that he was not there. Is he ill?'

'He is not well,' replied Mary, colouring; 'and he is lying down. I do not think he is asleep, sir, if you would like to go up stairs, and speak to him. Poor fellow, he is very low, and he is more likely to think of what you say now than he might be at other times; for a word spoken in season, how good it is!'

'What is the matter, Mary?' said her pastor, in a lower voice. 'You look unhappy; and there is something about your husband's state that distresses you, something more than mere illness.'

'Oh, sir,' she replied mildly, 'I cannot find it in my heart to complain of my dear husband; but I am very unhappy. I know you will not misunderstand me, or accuse me of unkindness to him; so I will tell you the truth. Richard went to his club on Friday night. He has only just joined it against my wishes: for the members meet once a month at the Green Dragon, and are obliged by the rules of the club to spend three-pence in drink for the good of the house. But dear me, sir, that three-pence seems to me like the bait in a trap to

draw the poor creatures in; and so it has proved with Richard. He had been taking a sovereign or more for a bill that Friday morning, and he had forgotten to give it me, as he always does; and so he sat drinking with a set of idle fellows, till all the money was gone. He came home on the Saturday afternoon, but not before, in a sad intoxicated state. I happened to ask him for some money, and he was very angry and violent, and he swore at me, and walked out of the house, and where he was all the Sunday and the Monday I know not. This morning he came home, and from what I can make out, he lost his way, and must have slept in some out-house, his clothes were all torn and muddy. But he looked so miserable; and his heart was so full of sorrow, that I said nothing to reproach him; and I got him up stairs, and persuaded him to go to bed, and made him a cup of warm tea. I have just come down from him. I fear he has taken a bad cold, and is likely to be very ill.'

Richard Norman was a favourite with every one, from his frank, pleasant manner and fine temper. He was an excellent workman, and the best hand at shoeing a horse for many miles round, a good scholar, and a clear-headed, intelligent young man. He was sincerely attached to his gentle, pious wife, and to his two little boys; and he often told her that he was never so happy as when at home with her and his children. In one thing, however, he was sadly wanting; he was not a godly man. He went to church; he did not openly profane the Lord's day; he held his minister in high esteem, and treated him with great respect; but he was a stranger to vital godliness. Love to God as his Saviour in Christ was not the principle on which he acted. Though he knew better, yet, like too many others, he acted as if religion and the concerns of daily life were separate and unconnected things, forgetting that the kingdom of God is within the godly man, and that it

is there like leaven, leavening by its powerful and all-pervading influence the whole man.

The clergyman found Richard in a humbled and sorrowful state. His eyes were dull, and his face pale, and his strong muscular arm lay listlessly on the coverlid of the bed.

'Ah, sir,' said he, 'you find me with an aching head and an aching heart. They have told you, I suppose, that I broke out last week, and this is the end of it.'

'I missed you at church,' said the minister, 'and on passing the forge I saw you were not there, and I came to your house to see what could be the matter, and I find you lying in your bed on this fine summer day, fit for nothing. Dear friend, a sight like this gives me a heavy heart; I was beginning to hope better things of you.'

'Well, sir, it will not happen again, and this time you must look it over.'

'It matters little, Richard, whether I look it over, or not: I am not your judge, but your friend. The question is with God. Will he overlook such doings? Seek, through Jesus Christ, for God's help. Arouse yourself, and pray that the strength of God may be given you to resist the tempter. We must resist the devil, if we would overcome temptation; but we fight at fearful odds in our own strength.'

'I know it, I know it well, sir, and I will pray to God for strength.'

'Yes, my friend, but you must act upon your prayer; you must humbly trust in Christ Jesus, that for his sake strength will be given in answer to your prayer. You must bear in mind that every command God gives to us has its promise linked to it. God says to you, Work—strive—fight; and the promises linked with these commands are—I will work in you, I will strive in you, I will fight in you. Brace yourself to set your face like a flint in resisting the devil: this is God's

command. But he has given, linked with the command, this promise, "and he will flee from you." You and I, and all men, Richard, are taught of him that we must either overcome our great adversary, or he will overcome us. There can be no quarter given on either side; if you do not conquer him, he will most assuredly hold you captive to the end.'

'Ah! well, sir, I have had a sickening of these ways. I feel as if I could never take any pleasure in them again. What a fool I have been! I have spent my money, and I feel so bad and poorly, that I cannot do a stroke of work, and I have lost all my appetite for food. I do not think, sir, I have tasted a crumb these two days. Well, well, this is the end of it, this is all I have got by it, and I am sure I can say I have done with it.'

'I wish I could say with you, this is the end of it,' replied the pastor. 'I hope it is; but mark my words,—unless you repent of your sins and flee to Christ for pardon and safety, and thus overcome the evil one in the strength of God, this is not the end of it, the end must be far worse: "The wages of sin is death," not only of the body, but of soul and body in hell. Let me tell you, too, that it is easy to say now, "I have done with it;" but when this sickness and this low fit are over, the temptation will come back in its strength, and then, if, with repentance and true faith, you have not yielded yourself to Christ, and in his strength do not resist and overcome the temptation, you may say, as thousands have done before you, "I will seek it yet again." But I will say no more now; I will kneel down and pray for you, and I hope you will pray with me, that God will give you his Holy Spirit, and help you to do his will.'

The pastor walked home, thinking over Richard Norman's state of mind: he sighed deeply, for he saw little that was

satisfactory about him. Richard felt, as any one naturally would, the suffering brought upon him by his sin, but there was no deep conviction of the sin itself. All his replies had shown that he had little or no sense of having offended against God; they were not replies to what his minister had said to him, but merely the expressions of his own opinions—opinions full of confidence in his own wisdom, and reliance on his own strength.

On the following day Richard was at his work again at the forge, and on the following Lord's day he was in his usual place at church, and during the next few weeks he kept his resolution not to enter a public house; but his wife saw with much concern that there was no humility and no serious desire of amendment about him. He seemed to pride himself on the good resolution that he had made; and when she warned him not to trust too much to his own strength, but to remember what their minister had so often endeavoured to impress upon them, he laughed and said that it was all very well for the minister to preach as he did, that it was his place and his calling to do so; 'but,' he added, 'the minister does not know me. Do you think if I say a thing I cannot do it? And let me tell you, that though parsons are right to be preachers, there is no occasion for a wife to be one. But make yourself easy on that score,' he said, when he saw that she looked grave and unhappy, 'you shall not hear of me again at the Green Dragon, unless I go there in the way of business. In that case, you know, one must take half a pint with a customer; and I can tell you and the parson too, that if one is to take care of one's business, one must not affront a customer.'

Whether it was in the way of business or not, (probably it was), not many days after this conversation, Richard was again at the Green Dragon. He came home, however, at ten o'clock, a little excited in spirits, but not drunk. His wife asked him

mildly where he had been; and he replied, in a careless laughing way, 'Only with a friend at the Green Dragon.' Mary could not laugh, but appeared much distressed: and he was angry, because she scarcely answered when he told her some of the news of the village which he had heard that night.

She was sad and thoughtful, and had scarcely heard or heeded what he said. 'Dear Richard,' she said, waking from her thoughtfulness, 'indeed I do not want to provoke you; but I cannot find it in my heart to join in any light conversation, when I feel that you are beginning again to fall back. I cannot smile, I cannot talk with a light heart; and, Richard, is it not the fact that you are trying to throw off the feeling that you have done wrong, by putting on this careless, random manner?'

'Pshaw, nonsense,' he replied, 'you are always finding fault now.'

'Not always, dear Richard, very seldom: but I am anxious because I love you so dearly, and I know that, from your love to me, you will let me speak as a faithful friend, as well as a loving wife. You are all the world to me, my husband. Sometimes indeed I fear that I would rather please you than serve God, for I am silent when I know I ought to speak. I cannot bear to see a frown upon your face, and I am always afraid of speaking to you in a wrong way. If I have done so to-night, pray forgive me; will you not forgive me, Richard?' and she put her hand in his, and looked up with a grave but tender earnestness into his face.

He looked at her for a few moments without speaking, and then a smile full of affection spread over his whole face, and he said, with a trembling voice, 'God bless you, God bless you, my poor Mary, you are the best wife in the world,' and he tenderly pressed the hand which was clasped in his, and looked down upon her sweet countenance with approving

delight; 'and you are the kindest and the wisest—there is no resisting you, and I say it, and I care not who hears me; you are right, and I am wrong, and it is I that ought to ask forgiveness; but I know this, I am not worthy of such a wife.'

'You are not so happy in my love,' she said, tenderly, 'as I am in yours; and when I sit at my work of a night, while you read the Bible or the Pilgrim's Progress to me, I often feel that I am the happiest creature on earth.'

'The Pilgrim's Progress,' he said; 'ah, that puts me in mind that I was to read it to you to-night, and that I promised John that he should sit up half an hour longer to hear me read it.'

'He did sit up,' said Mary, 'and he bore his disappointment very well. I told him, too, that dear father would perhaps be with us to-morrow night, and read to us; and I promised to ask you to let him sit up to-morrow, as he had borne his disappointment so well.'

The next evening was spent at home, and Richard read the Pilgrim's Progress to his wife, and John stayed up to hear his father read. When the child was gone to bed, they sat for some time quietly conversing together on the wonderful book before them. 'If this book is right,' said Richard, 'and I suppose it is, I am wrong. It is fine reading, Mary, and I feel, when I am reading it, that religion is the one thing needful, and that I would rather be such a man as Christian than a crowned king. We see in this book how a poor man may be called by God to walk in a better way than any of the ways of the world which lead to riches, and rank, and honour. What a grandeur there is about this poor pilgrim! what wonderful things God does for him! what honour he puts upon him!'

'And why may not you be like him?' said Mary; 'you have the same invitation, and the same gracious God, Richard.'

'Why, to be sure, that is true,' said Richard, thoughtfully. He sat for some minutes in silence, then looking at his wife, he said with a smile, 'But I should not leave my wife behind me in the City of Destruction, or have her calling after me to come back; the contrary is my case. The wife is the pilgrim, and I fear that she might say of her husband—he is still in the City of Destruction.'

'No, no,' said Mary, looking him affectionately in the face, 'let it be said of us, dear husband, that we are both gone on the pilgrimage together. How happy we might be together! we have health and strength, we have neither poverty nor riches, but daily bread in sufficient abundance; our dear children are a real blessing to us, and we love one another: how happy we might be!'

'Might be!' repeated Richard; 'say rather, how happy we are! What do we want more? To-night, I, for my part, feel quite happy; I never am happy when I sit drinking with a set of loose, drunken, quarrelsome fellows at the Green Dragon; and I often wish myself back sitting on one side this cheerful fire, with my book in my hand, with you sitting on the other side making or mending for me or the children, and between whiles looking up with a smile, or to ask a question, or to say a word or two about what I am reading. No, no, I say—how happy we are! Why do you not answer, Mary dear?'

'Because I should still say—might be.'

'Why, what do we want more?'

'We want to love God more,' said Mary, meekly but solemnly; 'we want to serve God better, and to have at all times the thought of his presence; we want to be really one with Christ, as the branch is with the vine; we want to pray more earnestly for the Holy Spirit. I fear, dear husband, that Jesus would say to you and to me also, "One thing thou

lackest;" and that one thing is a real trust in Christ, the one thing needful, and the only thing that will stand.'

'It is true,' said Richard, very gravely; 'at least it is true of me, but not of you, Mary; I will never agree to that: I only wish I were half as good as you.'

'O Richard, do not talk in that way; you know not how often I feel cast down by the vileness of my own heart. I see the right way, but I often fear I have not yet entered it. I know that one thing is needful, but I am sometimes sadly afraid that I have not yet chosen it. But we ought to be very happy and very thankful to God for all his goodness to us. It will be our own fault, Richard, if we are not happy.'

Were they not happy? Mary wished to persuade herself that they were. Her cheerful spirit sometimes threw a colouring of hope, bright as a rainbow, over the prospect before her; but the tints often faded as quickly as they appeared, for her mind frequently misgave her. She felt, though she could not bear to own it to herself, that her beloved husband was unstable as water. He sometimes would meet her earnest words with a slightly wearied look, or a cold yet good-natured indifference. Eyes less quickly observant than those of a wife might not have heeded this, but Mary's love could not always blind her.

A year had passed away—Richard was ill in bed. Mary, pale and sorrowful, sat by his bedside, her heart full of anxious thoughts. His life was given over; and dreadful as the thought of losing him was to her, far more dreadful was the thought that he was not fit to die, that he had not given himself to Christ, and that he was dying in his sins, and was therefore not prepared to meet God.

There is no occasion to dwell upon the circumstances by which Richard had gone back, or rather sunk down from one

degree of sin to another and lower degree. It is an old story, too well known; a common sight, too often seen; but the worst thing about Richard's state was this, that he had fallen into evil courses, with his eyes open to the sin and the danger of them. His knowledge of Divine truth was clearer, his perception of God's goodness stronger, than before his late visitation. He could talk well of religion; he could bring forward many a passage of Scripture; he was quite aware of the claims of a crucified Saviour; but he had never yet given his heart and confidence to him, nor consequently set himself, with God's help, to forsake his sins. It is one thing to know we ought to do this, and another thing, in faith with watchfulness and prayer, and constant strivings of the whole heart and soul and strength, by God's help, to do it. His case, we repeat, is no uncommon one; we have known too many like cases. He loved his sins, and had no love for the kind forgiving Jesus, who died for sinners; so that he gradually yielded to the deceitfulness of his own wicked heart, and the temptations of the great adversary, whose work it always is to make the ways which lead to hell appear the pleasantest ways. He had become idle and careless about his business, and the consequence had been that another man, finding there was an opening for a new forge in the village, had set up a rival shop. Richard's customers would willingly have continued with him; but they often found no one except a young apprentice boy at his forge, and the fire out, and the master absent at the public house; or if they found Richard there, he was half drunk and very insolent on their complaining of his carelessness. They soon gave up troubling themselves to wait and lose their time, but took their horses and their work to the new forge, where the blacksmith, if not so clever a hand as Richard, was at least a sober, industrious man, and thankful and civil.

Mary bore all these trials very meekly; she prayed, and she watched over her temper, and set a guard upon her lips. She uttered not a single reproach; she never reasoned with her husband, or even spoke to him, when he was not sober, unless to soothe and persuade him. She took in needle-work and washing, and sat up late at night over her work, and rose before day to her washing. She closed her ears to the gossips of the village, who came with seeming condolence to tell her every now and then some new tale of her husband's excesses. She would not join in their lamentations over his intemperance, or permit a word to be spoken against him in her presence.—'I am his own wife,' she said, gravely, but with a trembling voice and eyes filled with tears, 'and I ought to be the last person to find fault with my dear husband, or to let others speak disrespectfully of him before me.'

The opening of the new forge had been a sore trial to Richard. He was enraged at the mere mention of his rival's name, and he went more frequently than before to the public house, and was often so loud and violent in his abuse of the other blacksmith, and his customers, and had become so irregular in his payments, that the landlady of the Green Dragon had begun to find him an unwelcome customer, and on more than one occasion had called her husband, who had Richard taken by the shoulders and turned out of the house.

But in the midst of his guilty career he had received a sudden check. He had been attacked with fever and laid prostrate and helpless on a sick-bed. The doctor had been called in, and had declared his complaint to be typhus fever, attended by alarming symptoms. He had begun to ramble in his talk, but had sufficient sense to beg that his minister might be sent for. The clergyman came to him, but he found

Richard in a delirium, and unable to understand the prayer which he, and the poor afflicted wife, offered at the bedside of the sick man. The fever reached its height, and the doctor gave up all hope of his recovery. The fervent prayers, however, of his wife and his pastor, that he might not be cut off in his sins, were graciously answered. At the crisis of the disease, contrary to the expectation of all, it took a favourable turn; he fell into a refreshing sleep, and from that time he began to mend.

His minister found him one lovely spring morning sitting at the window of his bed-room. A few weeks had witnessed an affecting change in poor Richard. His once vigorous frame was wasted almost to skin and bone, his strength exchanged for the weakness of a child; but the tears—and they appeared to be tears of true repentance—were streaming down his hollow cheeks, and in a voice scarcely louder than a whisper, he entreated his pastor to pray for him, and with him, that God would forgive him, and give him a new heart, and teach him to lead a new life.

His whole manner was that of one humbled to the dust, and in deep earnest.

'You see, sir,' he said, 'to what a miserable plight I have brought myself; but, oh! is not God very good to me? He has stopped me in my evil courses and brought me low, and yet he has not cut me off in my sins. He gives me time to repent, and if ever I am restored to health and strength again, you shall see, and all shall see, what a different life I will lead. How awfully have I abused his mercies! What a cruel, wicked husband I have been to the best of wives; what a bad father to my poor children; what a miserable home have I made for them! But there must and shall be a change. The word of God has been neglected by me: there has been no family altar. Yes, I will try to be a new man; my wife

shall be happy again; I will set a good example to my children.'

'We will pray,' said the minister, 'that God will give you grace to give yourself to Christ, to believe in him as your Saviour, and to keep the good resolutions you have made. I will not distrust you, my poor friend; I hope you are at last in earnest. You say truly that God has brought you very low. He has done so, I trust, to bring you to yourself, and to teach you to know yourself, as having sinned against him, and to lead you to Christ for pardon. I am glad to see you humbled, and I will deal faithfully with you. My words may pain you, but I must not shrink from laying before you your awful state. You are very guilty, and you must look to Christ, and seek for pardon for his sake.'

Then he spoke to him of that blood which 'cleanseth from all sin,' without the application of which, through a living faith in Christ, neither sorrow for sin nor confession of sin can be of any avail. He opened his Bible, and pointed out to Richard some of those passages in which the great and long promised Messiah is spoken of as a *suffering* Redeemer. He endeavoured to show him, how it behoved Christ to suffer, because an atoning sacrifice was needed; how, in fact, all Scripture seems, like John the Baptist, to point to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; for on his meek head the Lord God hath laid the iniquity of us all. And then he endeavoured to show him that in order to form a true conception of the enormity of our sin, we must behold it as set forth to our view in Christ crucified; the tremendous penalty exacted by the justice and holiness of God being the strongest argument to prove the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

'Let me ask you, Richard,' he added, 'have you yet really believed in this loving Saviour? Have you yet received him by faith? If you have not, I cannot wonder that you have

never yet seen your sin in its true character, nor been enabled to realize in the Lord Jesus Christ a deliverer from sin, and a Saviour from eternal wrath.'

They knelt down together, and the minister prayed for pardon and grace, and offered up praise and thanksgiving to the God of all grace for the mercy and long suffering which he had shown in still sparing one who had been hitherto but as a cumberer of the ground. When they rose up, the grave countenance of Richard, and the tears that filled his eyes as he returned the affectionate grasp of his pastor's hand, filled him with hope that a saving impression might at length have been made on the heart of the sick man. He had beheld, he thought, for the first time in Richard Norman, some genuine signs of that repentance which is unto life.

The next day, the clergyman called again. Mary met him at the door, her face bright with smiles; her husband was much better, she said; he was able to sleep, and take nourishment; he was then in a sweet slumber, and it might seem a pity to wake him; but she was sure that he would grieve to hear that their minister had been there, and he had not seen him; and Mary added that her husband appeared like a changed man. The tears were in her eyes, as she spoke of his humble, thankful spirit, and of his tender love to her and his children.

Some days after, the pastor found Richard in his pleasant garden. The day was brilliantly fine, and the reviving freshness of the mild air had done him more good, he said, than all the medicine he had taken. The doctor had told him that he should not come again, and had bidden him to put on his great-coat and walk up and down the garden; and there he was, breathing the sweet garden smells, the fragrance of the lilacs, and the sweet-briar, and the wall-flowers, and listening to the song of the goldfinches which always built their nest in the

pear tree opposite his bedroom window. His gentle wife sat at the open window, raising her eyes from time to time from her needle-work to give a glance at him, or to beg him to remember what the doctor had said, that he must not stay out too long at a time to tire himself, but come in and rest, and then go out again.

She rose up when she saw the clergyman with her husband in the garden, and went out to meet him. It was the season when the apple and pear trees were covered with their delicate blossoms, and the garden and orchard were white with them. They were conversing about the blossoms, and Richard was saying that he had never seen such a year for blossoms, and, if the mild weather lasted, such a promise for fruit.

'Let us learn the lesson which God is teaching us here,' said the minister, with an earnest voice. 'The blossoms will soon be falling at your feet, and they are but as the promises of a fair profession. I find in you, my friend, fair promises, but I trust that the same Being who as a God of providence causes the blossom to set to fruit, and swells and enlarges and ripens that fruit, may, as a God of grace, set the blossoms of the promises you have put forth to-day, and, in like manner, nourish and strengthen and ripen the fruit. But remember, Richard, that blossoms do not necessarily bring forth fruit.'

There was, indeed, a fair promise about Richard. His heart seemed deeply affected; his repentance genuine repentance. He was, or seemed to be, humble; and it is a good sign when a man who has been self-confident becomes humble. His humility was put to the proof. James Burnet, the person who had opened the rival forge, and by his civility and attention drawn away the customers whom Richard had neglected, wanted a man to assist him, and Richard went to him and offered his services, frankly owning with what a bad spirit he had formerly regarded him.

James Burnet was a kind-hearted man; he was advanced in years, and had no family. He was so well pleased with Richard's manner that he engaged him on higher wages than he had intended giving, and promised, if he continued steady for the next year, to take him into partnership. It was agreed on all sides that Richard had turned over a new leaf. He had never been more diligent and industrious; and he worked so cheerfully, and bore the change from master to servant with so contented a spirit, that even those who had thought worst of him before, began to say that they had hopes of him now. He seemed to have forsaken the public-house altogether, and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of some of his former companions, when they endeavoured to draw him back to his former courses.

The year of trial had half expired, and Richard still continued steady. It happened one afternoon that the landlord of the Green Dragon came to bring a horse to be shod, and to consult Burnet about making a light iron gate to his garden. He found Richard alone at the forge. After the horse was shod, they began to talk about the gate; and it was agreed by both of them that it would be necessary to see the place, and to take the measure on the spot, in order to make the kind of gate which the landlord required.

'You cannot carry the spot in your eye, Richard,' he said; 'and though, after your good resolutions, it would not be fair to ask you to enter my doors, you are man enough, I should think, to come to the garden without going further, unless you wish it.'

'I should hope I am,' said Richard, laughing; 'and as I see the master coming, I will walk with you at once, unless, indeed, you like to ask him to go and take the measure of the gate.'

'No, no,' said the landlord; 'you are the man for me, Richard; besides, I and my mistress like old faces better than

new ones. To tell you the truth, Richard, there is many a one as well as myself would like to see you back at your forge, taking your proper place. And as for old Burnet, we all think he had no right to come and step in over your head, when he had a good property of his own, and might have lived independent: not that I ever saw the colour of his money.'

The day was wet and cold, and as Richard and the landlord stood at the garden-gate, the landlady saw them, and threw open the window, and accosted Richard with one of her most gracious smiles.

'How do you feel yourself, Mr. Stranger?' she said, 'for you have been away long enough for me to forget your name.'

'Whatever his name may be,' said the landlord with a frown, (whether affected or not we cannot tell,) 'he has made up his mind to continue a stranger, and you must not entice him to take a glass.'

The landlady disappeared from the window; but in another moment her portly figure was seen filling the doorway, and raising her voice, she cried, 'Who tells me that I am not to be mistress in my own house, and that I have not a right to treat a stranger to a warm comfortable glass on a cold shivering day? But first let me see what you are about in my garden.' And she came forward with her fat arms a-kimbo. 'Why, dear me, Mr. Stranger'—and she put her hand familiarly on Richard's shoulder, and threw herself back with laughter—'I think I ought to know your face, and a handsome face it is. But tell me, Dick,' she added, changing her voice to a more familiar tone, 'how are you, and how is your good wife? I have a great respect for you both; for her in particular, for she is a dear little quiet body, and very pretty behaved. I do not want you to drink, man; and if I am not mistaken, your last score is still owing for, not that I should

be so unhandsome as to ask you for it. But I am not going to stand starving here, good people. As for you,' she said to her husband, 'your nose is blue with the cold, and you make me cold to look at you. There's a good bright fire within, and I shall go and mix you a comfortable glass of rum and water, not too strong of the water, just to keep the cold out; and I shall take it quite unhandsome, Dick, if you go away without a drop of comfort, just in the way of business—nothing more—nothing more.'

Everything was settled about the gate, and Richard was turning resolutely away, when the landlord made another effort.

'One glass in the way of business—it's only the right thing; you can make a resolution, and I suppose you can keep it. Come, come, man, show that you can keep it. One glass, and then I will turn you out; one glass in the way of business, and no more.'

Richard hesitated: 'Well, I suppose there can be no harm in one glass.' His look of honest, hearty good humour was exchanged for a silly smile, as he followed the landlord into the house. What arguments were used there, what temptations he was plied with, it is not necessary to inquire: the case is a common one. He found it easier to enter the house than to leave it, and when he left it, the stars were shining in the midnight sky.

There was but one window in the village where a light was burning: it was the window of the room in which his anxious wife sat watching for his return. She raised her head, but said nothing, when he entered. He turned away from the stedfast look with which she regarded him: had he not turned away, he would have seen the tears that streamed from her eyes. But he heard the sigh, which she attempted to check as it rose from her bosom. She took the plate that she had

prepared for his supper, from before the fire, and placed it upon the table. He merely looked at it, shook his head, and without exchanging a word with the gentle, patient woman, who was too wise and too kind to risk a word on such occasions which might provoke him to violence, he stumbled upstairs to bed.

The next morning he awoke with the drunkard's thirst upon him, and the same evening found him one of the noisiest of the noisy in the kitchen of the Green Dragon. In fact, Richard had, as they say, broken out, and all his fair promises and good resolutions were as much disregarded as if he had never made them.

His downward course had, it soon appeared, not been changed, but only interrupted, by the serious illness with which he had been visited. To use the strong language of Scripture, 'The dog had turned to his own vomit again.' Richard, however, did not neglect the forge. Sometimes with an aching head, and sometimes in a half stupified state from the excesses of the past night; but every day he went to his work.

James Burnet spoke to him in a plain and serious way, but with kindness, on his sinful habit. Richard met his grave remonstrances with a laugh, and asked him what cause he had to complain so long as his work was done.

'You remember my agreement, however,' said the old man, 'that your entering into partnership with me was to depend on your steadiness.'

And Richard was full of promises, which were broken and forgotten almost as soon as made. Though the morning found him at his work, scarcely an evening passed in which he was not drinking at the Green Dragon, and was soon known to be an habitual drunkard.

His admirable wife never lost either her temper or her

patience, and still hoped, or tried to hope on, that her beloved husband would yet turn to God, and forsake his evil course. She did not lose her opportunity of speaking to him kindly and seriously, when she saw he was in a state to hear her, and she spoke rather of the awful peril he was in, and the sin in the eyes of God and of the Saviour of sinners, than of her own sufferings and privations. She seldom if ever spoke to others about her husband, and, as before, she never encouraged nor permitted any conversation in which his conduct was blamed or commented upon. Though holding a low rank in society, and raised by no advantages of education above her calling, no lady of the land could have acted with greater delicacy or propriety. Her sweet and modest humility was, however, the fruit of her meek trust in Christ. The only comfort she had was in prayer, and she would often go up to her chamber to pour out her full and heavy heart to God in earnest petitions. On one occasion, as her eldest boy told their minister, after some frightful burst of intemperate conduct on her husband's part in the presence of the child, when her heart was almost breaking, she took the little fellow to her chamber, 'and as we knelt side by side,' said the boy, 'mother prayed for father, and that it might please God to turn father's heart; but mother never scolds at him,' added the boy, 'nor says a cross word to him.'

Richard did not repent of his evil ways, and did not return. It may seem reasonable to the reader, to expect that the drunkard would have been won by the wisdom and sweetness of such a wife as Mary. I feel that I cannot do justice to her character and conduct; but I learned in this case another proof, in addition to many I have before witnessed, that it is not in the power of any mere human being to change the heart of man.

Mary's faith and patience were sorely tried. Her husband

had now fully entered upon the drunkard's course. He scarcely ever passed an evening at his own house, but came home late, either partly or quite intoxicated. The occasional sin had now become the daily habit, and at times Richard was laid up with headache and sickness, and unable to work for some days together. James Burnet was several times on the point of dismissing him, but for Mary's sake he hesitated.

On going to the house to inquire for Richard, when he was not at his work, the kind old man had made acquaintance with Mary. He heard no complaint from her lips, he saw no anger on her countenance; but her pale and sunken cheeks and wasted form spoke more plainly than words could have done of deep inward suffering, and of failing health. When he learned the cause of Richard's absence, and that he was lying on his bed in a state of senseless intoxication, the words were almost on his lips, 'I have no further need of his services;' but Mary's sorrow and Mary's gentleness overcame him, and he had not the heart to add to her distress.

Richard also had his fits of remorse. He was, as many drunkards are, every now and then heartily sorry for his debased habits, and in a miserable state of depression; but his sin still kept its hold upon him, and after a few faint struggles it gained the mastery over him, and he still said, with the voice of a coward, 'I will seek it yet again.'

Another year passed away; another winter came round, and it set in with unusual severity. Richard, as it might be expected, was more and more hardened in his sin, and more and more lost to shame. Man must be either the slave or the master of his sin. The clergyman did not fail to seek for Richard, and to use his best exertions to rouse him from the awful state to which he had now sunk; but his words were listened to with a bare and dogged civility; his influence was apparently gone. He did what he could to support and

comfort the breaking heart of the poor wife; but he felt that he had little encouragement to give her. He saw with astonishment and admiration her silent, uncomplaining spirit, and her meek trust in her God and Saviour. It was evident enough, from the appearance of her house, and the poverty of her own dress and her children's, that times were altered with her; and he begged her never to scruple to come to him in any season of peculiar distress: but he little knew, till some months had passed away, how deep her distress and poverty had been. He little knew that her worthless husband, after earning fifteen shillings in the week, sometimes gave her at the end of the week scarcely enough money to purchase one meal for herself and her children. On one occasion the only sum she received from the week's wages was three-pence.

His kind-hearted master knew nothing of this; for Richard, when asked if he gave his wages, or the greater portion of them, to his wife, was ready with a lie, and assured him that he did; and Mary made no complaint against her husband, but endeavoured by her own exertions to support herself and her two children. It was but little she could earn, but she had accustomed her children and herself to very homely fare, and to depend on her heavenly Father for daily bread. Her neighbours were kind to her, and her little boys were often invited to share the meal of some poor family who had little to spare, but were willing to spare of that little to those more in want than themselves.

But those who continue in sin do not remain stationary, they wax worse and worse. So it was with Richard. The once frank, kind-hearted husband and father now seemed to live but for his own selfish gratification, and for the indulgence of his appetite in the brutalizing habit of drunkenness. He was seldom or ever entirely sober; but when he left the forge, where he seemed to keep up a kind of instinctive self-restraint,

he would often give way to a savage violence which terrified his wife and children. On one occasion, finding that his master (who began to suspect that all his money was spent in drinking) kept back a few shillings from his wages, and sent them by his eldest boy to his wife, the brutal fellow waylaid the child, beat him cruelly, and took away the money by force.

It was in the depth of the winter, and the snow lay thick on the ground. Mary looked at her children as they drew near to the scanty fire; it was dying away almost to embers at the bottom of the grate: their little hands were held out to catch the faint warmth; but the children shivered as they did so; the wretched fire seemed rather to make them feel their own coldness than to impart its warmth to them. Her stock of fuel was very low, but she gathered up the whole of it, and laid it on the expiring embers; and, taking her youngest child upon her lap, she sat down on a low stool close to the fire, and as she pressed him to her bosom, she said, 'We shall soon have a bright blaze, and my little Willy will be quite warm and comfortable. Come, John'—speaking to the elder boy, and holding out her hand to him—'I have room for you also; I know that, though you are a big boy, you sometimes love to sit on your mother's lap; come and help me to warm our little Willy.'

John threw his arms round his mother's neck and kissed her; but he was a manly, thoughtful boy, and he said, 'There will soon be a good hot fire, mother, but there's no more wood in the cupboard, and not a bit of coal. Do you sit here with Willy, and I will go to the wood and fill the sack as full as I can carry it, and I can go twice and bring enough for to-day and to-morrow morning.'

'No, my brave boy,' she replied, gently patting his head;

'I know you would do your best to help me, but you can help me better here than out of doors. You must be nurse to baby, and rock the cradle where she sleeps, and you must take care of Willy and not let him go too near the fire or touch it—I dread his burning himself; but you are always kind to your little brother. And now, my Willy, as you are warm you shall sit here'—and she moved the stool further from the fire —'and you must sit very still, and you must not make a noise to wake baby. John will read you a beautiful story out of the Holy Bible, while I am away, and I shall make all the haste I can to come back. But first bring the sack to me, John, for I must go to the wood for sticks, and I dare say Nancy Jones or one of the neighbours will go with me, and so I shall have company, you see, and we shall not be very long away.'

Mary drew her tattered shawl more closely around her, and tied a handkerchief over her bonnet under her chin; for the cutting wind was blowing strongly. Her kind neighbour Nancy Jones went with her to the wood. She had no need of fuel, and had no wish to go out to gather it on that inclement day, but she did not say this to Mary; her heart was touched with pity when she saw her poor neighbour's distress, and she offered, as she had done before, to go with her. They set out together.

The day was unusually raw and cold, for a thaw had begun. The deep snow was melting away into puddles and mud, and the ruts in the road were in some places filled with water. Mary's eyes had lately become weak, and their sight dim. They were more than commonly tried on that day by the dazzling glare of the snow; and as she walked along she frequently stumbled into ruts and holes ankle-deep in water. Her shoes were old and thin, and she returned home dripping with wet, and shivering with cold. Her children welcomed

her with delight, and she received their caresses with smiles; but her smiles were faint, and she said little; her voice, when she did speak, was scarcely louder than a whisper: she was indeed almost overcome with drowsiness, and her eldest boy, thinking that she was sleeping from fatigue, did not like to disturb her. He gave Willy his supper, and undressed him and put him to bed. When he came down, he found his mother awake, and the baby in her arms; her child had awoke crying, and she was tenderly folding it to her bosom, and hushing its wailing with a low, sweet song. She soon succeeded, and the infant lay on her knees, looking up to her mild face, its eyes closing and opening as it was yielding to sleep, till they were quite closed; and with a smile playing round its lips it gradually sunk into a sweet slumber. Mary rose up and laid her infant in its cradle; for awhile she bent down over the cradle, gently rocking it, and still murmuring her low, sweet song; but when she attempted to rise, she tottered and fell to the ground. Her son John sprang forward to raise her: she had fainted, and lay pale and insensible. The poor boy looked at her for a moment, and thought her dead, then ran with all haste to call in one of their neighbours. Mary was very ill.

The doctor was sent for, and when he came and had felt her pulse, he shook his head. He stood looking at her in silence for some minutes. John watched his grave countenance with an anxious stare, but said nothing. When he had left the room, the poor child stole on tiptoe to the foot of the stairs. The doctor was talking to the two neighbours, who had come in to put his mother to bed. He heard the doctor say—'It is a bad case; it will turn to typhus. If she is not better by to-morrow morning, it will go hard with her. See that she takes the medicine I send immediately. Have you no one here to come to my house for it?'

John came forward—'If you please, sir, I can go for the medicine.'

'So you can, my little man,' said the doctor; 'but do not look so downcast; we hope your mother will soon be better—at least we will do all we can to make her so.'

The medicine came, and was given to the gentle sufferer. Two of her neighbours sat by her bedside, watching her unquiet slumber. Her eldest boy, after running to the Green Dragon to bring his father home—but his father was not there—crept into his bed and cried himself to sleep. An hour after midnight Richard staggered into the house, overcome not so much by drunkenness as by fright. He had been to the neighbouring town, for it was market day, and had remained drinking, as usual, at a pot-house there. On his return home in the silent night, he had seen, as he thought, (what was doubtless merely the vision of his own distempered brain,) a white figure rise suddenly from the earth; it had stood before him in the road, and when he drew near he saw that it was a corpse, but the face was his wife's. The wretched man came home to find that there are realities far more terrible than the fancies which spring from a disordered imagination. His loving and devoted wife lay pale and well nigh senseless as a corpse upon her dying bed, the victim of his own heartless and wicked cruelty.

The morning came, and Mary seemed to be better; she had wandered in her speech during the night, and when she had been raised to take her medicine, though she had opened her eyes, it was evident to all that she had noticed no one; but now when Richard spoke in a voice of unusual tenderness, the strange but once familiar tones of that well-known voice roused her from her lethargy. She saw her husband's face, and a faint smile played round her pale lips; she heard the wail of her infant, and turned her eyes with an imploring look

as if asking for the child; it was placed beside her on the bed; but in another moment she was again unconscious.

Richard had taken up his station by the bedside of his wife, and all that the most tender affection and attention could do, he now did. But it was too late! The progress of the disease had been unusually rapid. When the doctor came and felt her pulse, he said that his worst fears had proved true, and that she was evidently sinking under a low typhus fever, in which all human aid would prove useless. When he was gone, the neighbours who had hitherto attended to her with great kindness, panic-struck by their dread of the fever, stole away one by one from the room, and returned no more.

In the course of the day the clergyman came, but Mary was still insensible: she did not hear his voice, she could not join in the prayer which he offered by her bedside. All that the doctor had ordered for the dying woman, and food for the husband and children, were sent by him; and on the following morning, accompanied by his wife, he came again. They had no fear of the fever, and knew not till then that the neighbours had forsaken the house. Piteous, indeed, was the spectacle which they beheld. Richard was sitting by the bedside, his features fixed in a stony expression of despair: the two boys, one in his arms, and the other standing by his side, their pale but childish faces wet with fast flowing tears. On the bed lay the cold, lifeless corpse of poor Mary, who had expired about an hour before. Never had they seen so ghastly an object, or one in whom every vital power seemed to have sunk so entirely from the utter exhaustion of that fatal disease. The infant, scarcely less pallid than its mother, lay gasping and almost expiring, with its lips just touching her breast, where it had sought in vain for nourishment. It is a true picture; but no description can paint the scene as it presented itself in its reality to the eye-witness who records it.

When words of kindness had aroused the wretched husband from his stupor, and his tongue was loosened, he told his visitors that he could not express to them what he had gone through that night, what he had suffered in being alone with the dying and insensible woman, hour after hour, with not a hand to help him, or a voice to speak one word of counsel or of comfort. All the night she had been dying; and from time to time, he had knocked upon the wall that separated his neighbour's house from his, in the hope that some one would come to him. He knew that they could hear him, and he had called as well as knocked. At last in his madness—for he had felt like one maddened by the agony of his feelings—he had cried and even shrieked aloud, entreating them to come for pity's sake; but no voice answered, not a sound was heard, not one would come—so great, he supposed, was their dread of the fever.

The day was raw and bitterly cold, the snow lay thick upon the ground, and a north-east wind came sweeping round the church, when the coffin which contained the body of Mary and of her infant was lowered into the grave. Trembling not only with the piercing cold, but from his own remorse and agony of spirit, Richard stood at the open brink of the grave, the object alike of pity and of scorn to the crowd that stood around, staring at the wretched man. He seemed at times so overcome by inward suffering that the clergyman feared he would have fallen into the grave. After the funeral was over, his minister requested him to follow him into the vestry; and when he had closed the door, and they were alone together, solemnly and yet kindly he addressed him.

'You see,' he said, 'the misery to which your sin has brought you, even in this present life. You may have sorrow now, and you may repent. God grant that you may; but

nothing that you can do will bring back your poor wife from the grave. You know that I would not willingly, and at such a season as this, give you unnecessary pain; but let me entreat you, now that you see some of the dreadful consequences of your sin, to receive this affliction as a warning from God. You did not know the value of health, and he laid you apparently upon a dying bed; you then uttered prayers and made promises, that if he spared you a little you would turn to him, and lead a new life, and prove your gratitude for his mercy. He had pity on you, and restored you to health and strength. But when the season of affliction was past, you forgot your promises, you did not look to Jesus Christ for pardon and for preservation from your sin, but you depended, I fear, upon your own strength. Alas! it was with you much as it was with him of whom our Lord spake when he said that the house was swept and garnished, but it was empty; and when the evil spirit returned, he came with a seven-fold force of temptation. There was strength at hand in the Lord Jesus Christ, from his Spirit, but you cared not to seek it. He that committeth sin is the servant of sin, and you have yielded to your besetting sin till you have become its very bond-slave. But God has now visited you with a more severe and heavy stroke. He has taken away your best earthly blessing, and now that it is too late, you awake to feel the value of her whom you neglected while she was still yours. You must bear with me when I tell you, that if you had taken a knife and plunged it into her heart, you would not have been more the murderer of your wife than you have been by your heartless and cruel unkindness. God, however, is still merciful to you. He might have taken you away in your sin, and left her to mourn without hope over your untimely death. Oh, let me now urge upon you, that, deep and dreadful as your present suffering is, suffering and affliction alone will not change you. It is by

the Spirit of God that the heart of man is really changed. "You must be born again." God has provided a Saviour for every sinner who will trust in him. Repent, then, and believe in Christ Jesus; cry to God, and plead in the name and by the blood of his dear Son for the full free pardon, and the grace you need. I dread to think how it may be with you, if you neglect to do this. The impression which has been made by this affliction, deeply as you may feel it now, will pass away; you will, after a time, fall back again to your sin. Go home, and alone in your chamber think of your state; pray as for your life for pardon, and grace, and strength from above. Bear with me, Richard, if I have wounded you; remember, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Indeed, I feel for you, and grieve for you; but I desire your good too much to speak less plainly and less strongly than I have done.'

The countenance of the minister of Christ was grave, but his voice was broken, and his eyes were filled with tears, as he took the hand of the wretched man; and as Richard returned its warm pressure, the tears fell fast from his eyes, and promises were on his lips.

'I shall see you to-morrow evening, Richard; may God bless and keep you till we meet again!'

On the morrow, at the appointed time, the clergyman was at Richard's door. He entered the house, and asked for Richard. He was not there; he had gone out and left no message. With a saddened heart, but willing to hope all things, he retraced his steps. Doubtless, he thought within himself, Richard has been called away by some engagement, which he had forgotten, or had not foreseen. On the following evening he made sure of seeing him; his work would be over, and he should be able to converse with him alone, to read the word of God and pray with him. He went; Richard was again absent. Only eight and forty hours had passed away

from the time of his wife's funeral, but Richard was again at the alehouse, in the company of drunkards, drinking himself drunk.

It was perhaps a month after the funeral of poor Mary, that the clergyman of the parish was passing Burnet's forge after nightfall. He saw the glare of the fire streaming across the road, and his quiet thoughts recurred to that evening when, some years before, he had stood at the old forge observing Richard at his work, and seen in the bar of iron the emblem of unsanctified affliction. Little did he think at that time that he should ever find in that once industrious labourer—that once cheerful, happy husband—the most striking and awful application of the similitude which had suggested itself to him. With a deep sigh he stopped again, and, shrouded by the gloom which the flood of light threw into deeper shadows, he stood looking into the forge. Richard was there, and, as on that well-remembered night, alone; but, oh, how changed! Scarcely was it possible to recognise, in that wasted frame and listless air, the once athletic and intelligent workman. He stood as before in the full glare of the brilliant light; but his fine features were now bleared and bloated, and his hand trembled as he drew forth the bar of iron from the furnace. There was still force in that uplifted and descending arm, but its former vigour was gone. The heart of the man was not in his work; and ere the usual number of strokes was given to the heated bar, he stopped, and stood gasping from exhaustion, passing his shirt-sleeve repeatedly over his reeking brow, to wipe away the heavy drops of sweat. When again he turned the bar, and when again the hammer fell upon it, its very sound told that it yielded not, as it should have done, to the blows he struck. With a deep and muttered curse, and a gesture of angry impatience, he snatched up the bar and

plunged it again into the furnace; but the fire was growing dim; it needed fuel, and Richard stood listlessly staring at it, as if he cared not, or thought not, to rekindle it. But though the light was fainter, it still served to show the countenance of him who stood close to it, and to reveal the dull and vacant expression of his look.

The village clock struck nine, and as the last stroke sounded, the face of Richard brightened. He started, and quickly fastened his shirt-collar, and hastened to put on his neck-cloth and his coat and waistcoat. Then again he stopped, and stood as if irresolute. 'There is an inward struggle now,' said the pastor to himself; 'what will the decision be—the desolate home and the motherless children, or the crowded alehouse and the cup of forgetfulness?' Richard soon awoke from the mood of his thoughtfulness. He put out the fire, and closed the shutters, and came forth from the forge. Again he stood apparently irresolute as to which way he should turn his steps. The renewed struggle, if there were one, lasted but for a moment; the slave yielded to his master. He seemed to look—but only to look—towards his own cottage; then suddenly turned, and walked fast away in the direction of the alehouse.

But he was stopped. A hand—the hand of a friend—was laid on his arm, and a few low but distinct words sounded in his ear—'Not to-night, Richard—the other way to-night.' The man started, looked round, but did not withdraw his arm.

'There has been an inward struggle, is it not so? The tempter conquered, and this is the decision, "I will seek it yet again."'

'You are right, sir, you have read my thoughts,' he replied. His voice was faint and broken, and, but for the darkness, his pastor would have seen the tears that filled his eyes. In a few minutes after they were sitting in the clergyman's study.

'Listen to me,' he said; 'I have a parable for your consideration, Richard. I saw a bar of iron; it was cold, hard, and unbending, but you had plunged it into the furnace; the fierce fire was around it, and there it lay till the furnace had done its work—the bar had become soft and pliable; and now it lay upon the anvil, and the blows of the hammer fell heavily upon it: to every blow it yielded; you might have bent it like a branch of willow. An hour after, and the bar was again as hard and as unbending as before; nay, I think I am not mistaken, it had become harder from the action of the fire and the blows of the hammer upon it. I have stood beside you when you saw me not, my poor unhappy friend, the darkness hid me. I have stood awe-struck and in sorrow as I marked in the bar of iron the image of yourself. I thought of the darkened chamber where I found you lying in sickness and in weakness. You were in the furnace then, and you were not consumed, for your life was spared, when the hope of your recovery was well nigh gone. I saw the deep and heartfelt thankfulness of your tender wife. I saw her rejoicing before God that you had been given back, as from the dead, to our prayers, and I thought I saw in you the humble, contrite spirit of a changed man;—but I was mistaken; the furnace of affliction may soften, but it does not change the man; the bar of iron, though softened for a time, returns, as it cools, to more than its former hardness. You recovered only to run to a worse excess of riot.

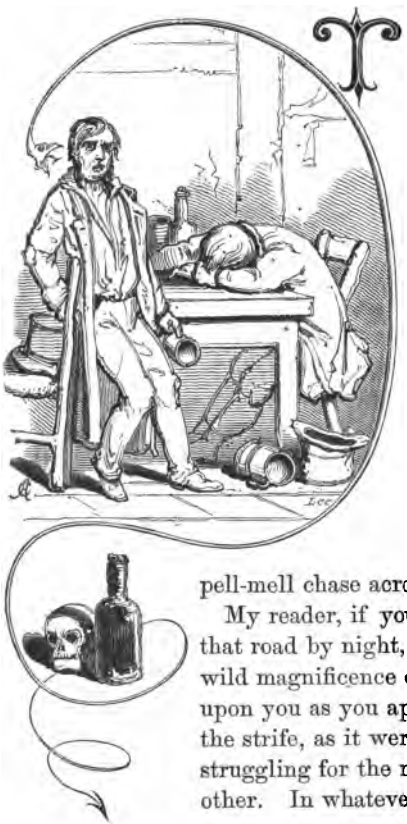
'But again the furnace was heated, and it was made fiercer and hotter than before, and again the bar of iron was thrust into the fire. The loving and devoted wife, the patient uncomplaining victim of all your heartless neglect and cruelty, worn down by want and suffering, and almost broken-hearted, sank into an early grave. The Lord saw that you knew not how to value the best blessing which he had given you, and

she was taken away from you. You cannot forget the suffering, the agony of that dreadful night when you sat alone by her bedside and saw her die; you cannot forget the torture you endured when you stood on the brink of her grave, and your conscience told you that you had been the cause of her death.

'It seemed to me at that time, that however long you might survive on earth, you could never know such deep and bitter suffering as that which you then experienced. I hoped, I trusted that you had at last become a changed man; but no, I had only seen the bar of iron in a furnace of seven-fold fierceness. I have since beheld it only more inveterately hardened. Bear with me, my friend,' said his minister, 'when I say that we see in yourself an evidence of all that affliction, even the most terrible, can accomplish, and of what it cannot accomplish. Richard, we have but one way before us. Things are come to their last extremity with you. You have come forth from your trials only more awfully hardened; your last state is worse than your first. That one way is still open to you; you are still mercifully spared to avail yourself of it, if you will. Christ is still set before you as "The way, the truth, and the life." His own words are, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," John xi. 25, 26. Come, let us fall down and humble ourselves before the Lord God Almighty; let us kneel together before his throne of grace. I will pray for you, and plead by the precious blood of the crucified Redeemer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that you may repent and believe the gospel: so that we may yet behold the dull hard bar of iron transformed into a vessel of the sanctuary, fit for the Master's use. Do not despair; it is not too late to hope for it—not too late to repent, believe, and live.'

THE BAR OF IRON.

PART II.



TWO men were walking along the road from Wellington to Oakengates. Night was closing in upon them, and a cutting sleet drove full in their faces. It was a dismal winter's evening. The sun had gone down behind the Wrekin, in a blood-red setting, among clouds of inky blackness; but the sudden outburst of a hurricane had rapidly broken up the heavy masses of clouds, and hurled them along in a pell-mell chase across the lurid sky.

My reader, if you have ever passed along that road by night, you can never forget the wild magnificence of the scene which opens upon you as you approach 'Ketley Bank'—the strife, as it were, of darkness and flames struggling for the mastery, the one with the other. In whatever direction you turn your

eyes, the fires of countless furnaces blaze forth from depths and shadows of impenetrable blackness, throwing the glare of their strong red light upon every prominent object. Tall shafts rise up amid the gloom, darting forth streamers of fire; huge piles of broad and solid masonry stand forth like old barbaric fortresses, flanked by towers and battlements, with broad volumes of flame rushing forth from their summits; here you see low lying fires glowing like beds of molten rubies, there fire leaping forth like fountains of flame, some close by the road side, others glaring in the far distance, but everywhere fires and flames conflicting with the shadows of darkness; and the darker and the more stormy the night, the more awful and unearthly is the spectacle before you.

My reader, you might have known the taller of the men who were then passing along that road. You would have seen by the red fire-light the bent form and haggard features of Richard Norman. His companion, though unknown to you, is not a stranger to Richard. They had not met till that night for many years, and the ways of those two men had been in a very different direction. Enoch Lee had been going forward in the path of the just, walking with God, a pilgrim to a better country, even a heavenly. I need not remind you what had been the course of Richard Norman. He was now, it appears, 'on the tramp,' in search of work, and he had learned from Enoch Lee that there was work at R——. He had intended, however, if constrained to go further, to stop a day there, that he might see the sister of his late wife. She had lately lost her husband and was living at R—— with her young children.

'Well, Richard, I will not say good night,' said Enoch, as the two men parted. 'You will find a bed at my house. We can give you a room and a welcome, for our lodger has left us. You must pay no more visits to public houses. You must not set your foot again in such places.'

'Fear not, fear not, friend,' replied Richard; 'after what I have told you to-night, you may rest assured I have done with public houses for ever, and I accept your offer and thank you for it. But I'll now go and spend half-an-hour with my wife's sister. I have not seen Margaret since my poor Mary's death.'

The driving sleet was beating with violence against the casement, and strong gusts of wind were bellowing loudly in the wide chimney of the old red house where Margaret dwelt, but all was warmth and comfort within. A large fire glowed and blazed upon the raised hearth, such a fire you may vainly look for in the dwellings of the poor, except in the coal districts; its genial warmth spread itself through the low but spacious room, and its pleasant light shone brightly upon the old familiar furniture, the shelf of crockery, the chairs of blackened oak, the old-fashioned clock with its dial of tarnished brass, the corner cupboard half open, and so disclosing its homely treasures of glass and china. But the bright fire-light fell not only on unliving objects. On one side of that cheerful hearth sat the neat, comely mistress of the house, plying her knitting needles, with that rapid movement which showed she was skilful at her work, and well used to it. Her plain dress, the coarse petticoat of brown linsey with its red stripe, the hose of black worsted, the stout shoes, the short bed-gown of dark calico, all told of decent poverty; and the close white cap with its peculiar border, tied by a black ribbon under her chin, showed that Margaret was a widow. A candle stood unlighted on the round table, and beside it an open basket, half filled with hanks of worsted. In the chimney corner, on the same side as her mother, a girl was sitting, bending down her sweet young face over her little brother, teaching him to knit, and guiding his small fingers with her own. The elder

boy sat in the other chimney corner opposite his mother, smiling and talking, with a glowing face, and holding his outspread hands over the fire. He had just come in from his work in the coal-pit, and washed his face and hands, and put on the warm, dry stockings and shoes, which his mother always kept hanging ready for him on the string that crossed the upper part of the open fire-place.

'Now then for tea,' said Margaret, fixing her knitting needles on the partly-made stocking, and in the ball of worsted attached to it, and putting the work into the basket. 'Lay aside your work, children, and, Mary dear, light the candle, and spread the table for tea. Then Ned shall read us a chapter in the Bible, and we will offer up our prayers, and go to bed.'

There was a knock at the door.

'Well, who can be coming at this hour of the night?' said Margaret, as she opened the door, and Richard Norman stood before her.

'You do not know me, Margaret,' he said, for she stared at him as at a stranger.

'Well, no,' said Margaret, 'I cannot say that I do. And yet I seem to know the voice, but the face is strange to me.'

'Have you forgotten Richard Norman—your sister Mary's husband?'

'My poor Mary, my poor Mary!' said Margaret, and the tears filled her eyes, and flowed fast over her face. For some little time she said nothing; her thoughts were gone after her sister, so tenderly beloved and so heartily mourned over. Then she wiped away her tears, and turned her eyes again to Richard and placed a chair for him. 'Thou art grown into an old man since I saw thee, Richard,' she said. 'What is it has done this? Is it trouble? is it want? I should not have known thee hadst thou not told me thy name; and if it were

not for thy voice, I should scarce take thy word for it now, and believe that I see before me the Richard Norman who was my poor Mary's love. You were a brave, beautiful couple as ever walked, on your wedding morning, and that is not such a many years ago; and now my Mary is in her grave, and thou art an old, broken-down man.'

'It is trouble and want—trouble of mind, want of food, want of clothing, want of everything, Margaret; sense, reason, truth, manly resolution, trust in God, hope in Christ, peace of mind—all have been wanting, and all have been driven away from me, and out of me, by drink. Drink has been my curse, my poison, my ruin; drink made me a brute to my tender, loving Mary, to my poor innocent boys. Drink has left me without house or home, and made me a wanderer and an outcast as you see me to-night.'

All the time he was speaking, Margaret's eyes were gravely fixed upon him. She marked his hollow, bloodshot eyes, his sunken cheeks, his thin ragged hair, his dirty garments. He was indeed an altered man; the former open expression of his countenance was exchanged for a down look, his once strong muscular frame was shrunk and stooping; his whole appearance spiritless, feeble, and slovenly.

'Richard Norman, thou hast taken up a hard service, under a cruel master. I think of our minister's words when I look upon thee—that we must either be the soldiers of Christ, or the slaves of the devil. To look upon thee, and to hear thee speak at the time of thy marriage, I should have said thou wert a good soldier, enduring hardness, knowing and loving the truth as it is in Jesus, and I counted my sweet Mary a happy woman to meet with such a husband,—and now what art thou?'

'What am I but the devil's bond-slave? You never spoke more true words, Margaret; but no, I have got out of prison,

and I am determined, with God's help, to break my bonds and be a slave no longer. I set off this morning from Market Drayton, and I find that I can get employment here, and I mean to stay for awhile. I shall be glad to be near you, and away from my old haunts. I shall think of Mary when I see you, and you will deal with me like a brother, and speak a word from time to time, to help me to go forward in the right way, and to warn me if you see that I am turning aside; but I hope and trust you will find no occasion to do that. I have had warning enough, and I am determined, with God's grace, to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light, and to become again a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. Won't you do this, Margaret—won't you, for the sake of your poor dear sister Mary? She loved me to the last, though, like a brute and a beast, I broke her heart. Won't you stand my friend?'

'You speak fair, Richard, and I doubt not you speak the truth, when you say that Mary loved you to the last; for if ever wife loved her husband, my poor Mary loved you; but no words of mine, or any friend, no love of wife, though such a love as that of thy wife, can win the heart to God when that heart is mad on its sin. Richard, you know as well as I can tell you the only One who can change your heart, and make you really a new creature, and you know how to seek him. Only seek the Lord while he may be found, for I would not have you deceive yourself. You will not live many more years if you go back to your sin. You are ill now. I can tell that well enough by your hollow cough and by the way in which you get your breath.'

'Well, Margaret, I cannot say I'm well. I went to the doctor, a good man I do believe, as I came here to-day; and after he had felt my pulse, he shook his head, and said that perhaps he could patch me up this once, but that if I broke

out again no skill of mortal man could save me. And now good night, Margaret.'

'Nay, Richard, man, thou wilt not be going till I have given thee some refreshment; I can make thee a cup of good tea, and toast thee a hot pikelet. You used to like my pikelets; so draw thy chair nearer the fire, and make thee comfortable. I cannot lodge thee even for a night, but thou shalt always find a cup of tea and a hearty welcome at my fireside, for poor Mary's sake. Whatever we may want,' she added, 'we have always one thing to be thankful for up in this coal country, we are never without a good large comfortable fire. Ned,' she said, 'where can we find a bed for your uncle?'

'Well, thank you,' said Richard, 'I believe I have found a lodging at the house of a neighbour of yours. Enoch Lee walked with me up here from Wellington, and he said he and his wife would take me in to-night.'

'He is a sober, godly man,' said Mary, 'and his wife is a dear kind soul. You may be very comfortable with them. But now, Richard, while the tea is brewing and Ned toasts the pikelets, I have a question or two to ask thee. First tell me why you never sent to me or my poor master, to let us know that Mary lay sick? We heard nothing of her illness till, poor dear, she was dead and buried; and then came the sad news that she had wanted food and firing in that bitter cold winter when she died. Poor as we were, my master and I would have sent her a load of coals, and I might have gone over to H— to nurse her. Oh, Richard, it was cruel!'

Richard could give no explanation, no account of anything, but the fact, that he had been himself in so helpless a condition, so stupified by drunkenness, and so prostrated by grief, that he had thought of nothing, and had done nothing right. Margaret's words quite overcame him, and he covered his face with his hands and sobbed aloud.

'Well, well, my poor Richard! I want to hear no more; I can understand it all. There, I will say no more about it. What is done can't be undone. I forgive thee, lad, and I pray that the Lord may do the same, and turn thy heart to him. But now, Richard, tell me about thy boys; where are they? Where is my dear honest John, who was always such a good boy to his mother? and Willy, where is little Willy, with his bright dark eyes shining out from his curling yellow hair, and his fair skin, and his mother's smile upon his lips, and those pretty dimples on his cheeks?'

'John has got a place,' said Richard, 'at Wollerton, and Willy is with my father and mother, and goes to the day and Sunday schools; and after a time, if I get constant work, I mean to have him home with me.'

'Ah, well, leave him where he is at present,' said Margaret. 'Thy parents are kind good people, Richard; I remember them and their pretty house, all covered over with an evergreen shrub and its red berries; and they loved my poor Mary. They will be kind to her boy.'

For many weeks Richard was steady, sober, and regular at his work. He had taken up his abode with Enoch and Martha Lee, and he often came in to pass an hour or two in the long evenings with Margaret and her children; but by degrees his visits grew less frequent, Margaret missed him at church, and a month passed without her seeing him. One evening she set off to Enoch's cottage, which was at the further end of R——, to inquire after him, but she met Enoch on the way. He was in a cart with another man. He stopped the cart, and got down to speak to her. He was, however, in a hurry, and could not stay to say much at that time; but he said he would come and call on her, for he had much to say about Richard. He had given him notice to quit his lodgings at the month's end.

'It is, then, as I feared with him,' said Mary, 'he has gone back and taken to the drink again; all his good resolutions have been broken.'

'They have been,' said Enoch, sorrowfully, 'but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew.' And he got into the cart and drove off.

Among the din of voices in the kitchen of the Raven public house, one voice made itself heard above the rest; it was the voice of Richard Norman.

'Done, done! shake hands, it's a bet, and I say done; what say you? I'd lay a wager with any one of you, as well as with Tom; but, Tom, if you take it upon yourself that's enough, that will do. Do you say done, or do you not? What! you can't make up your mind! You're afraid I'll beat you. Ha! ha! he's afraid! he's afraid! he knows I'll beat him! There, there, you may go; go along with you, and turn tee-total, and take the pledge. Go along. Landlord, bring that gentleman a glass of water, and put a handful of salt in it, and we'll make him drink it, won't we, Jim? But we won't help him to drink it; and give me another glass of ale, and put a drop of gin in it.

'Oh, good ale, thou art my darling,
Thou art my joy both night and morning,
Thou art my . . .'

'What's all this bother about?' said the man to whom the chief part of this noisy harangue had been addressed by no other than Richard Norman.

Tom Gulton had taken his pipe out of his mouth, and he stood behind Richard, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

'What's all this bother about? Take it quietly, Dick, my boy, and don't make such a row,'—his voice was husky, and his manner dull and heavy;—'I'm your man, Dick,' he added,

with a silly smile. 'There's my hand, and I say done, and done and done's enough between two gentlemen.'

Richard had turned round with a sudden glance, half angry, half merry.

'Tom, you're a fine fellow. Tom, you're a gentleman—you're a man of your word. I say Tom Gulton's a fine fellow, a splendid fellow, a glorious cove. I'll fight the man that says he's not. And now, Tom, sit thee down, man, and we'll turn to in right earnest. Who'll be judge, Jem or Joe?'

'Oh, Jem will be judge,' said Joe, 'I can't stop; I promised my old woman to meet her at Oaken Gates, and won't I catch it if I leave her to carry the box and the baby all by herself? I'm sorry I can't stop—may be I'll drop in after a while, and be in at the death. But, Jem, I'll lay a wager with you before I go; will you bet? I'll bet you a crown that Dick's the winner—a crown to be taken out in the landlord's best. What say you, Jem, is it done and done?'

'Ay, lad, it's done and done. I'll take you, for I'm certain sure that Tom will beat. Tom can take as much drink as any one I know, and walk home as steady as any man in his sober senses afterwards.'

Enough of this. The two men sat down to drink. The bet was a new hat and a silk handkerchief for the winner, and the loser to pay for the liquor drunk. They drank like men doggedly bent upon a deadly contest. Cans of beer and gin were brought one after the other, and emptied; but still another and another can was called for. There was shouting and noise at first in the close, hot, crowded room, reeking with bad tobacco smoke and other vile smells; but some of the most noisy, when they looked at the two men, and saw the dogged determination in their faces, felt a strange qualm, and a sickness come over them, and they went out to return no more. Others filled and refilled their pipes, and drew near to the table

at which the degrading strife went on; and gradually a hushed silence succeeded, broken only by the voice of the man who sat as judge calling to the landlord, 'Empty; both cans empty; more drink, more drink!' At last one of those who stood by called out with a cry that startled the whole company. He had been watching with intense looks the frightful contest, turning his stare now on this drinker, now on the other. The eyes of this man had been at last rivetted on Tom Gulton; his cup had just again been drained and again filled; his hand was again stretched out, he clutched at the handle—he fumbled with it—his eyes rolled, and the whites alone were seen—his chin dropped—his tongue hung out of his mouth—his face was livid—in another instant he fell forward—dead!

The corpse of the wretched man lay stretched out on the same table where, but a short time before, he sat in his living strength, reckless, stout-hearted, foolhardy.

It was an awful scene, and a horror fell on all that were present—on all but one of them, and that one was Richard Norman. He seemed to know that he had won his wager; but this was the only fact his mind had been able to grasp, when his antagonist fell from the table. He had risen from his bench and staggered about the room laughing and shouting. He resisted all attempts to quiet him, or to make him comprehend the dreadful event which had happened.

'Hurra, hurra!' he shouted, waving his arm over his head, 'come in, come in! Where are you, Joe—where *are* you, lad?' he cried, as his eye fell on the man coming in, who had left to meet his wife. 'You said you'd be in at the death, and here you are. I'm the conqueror, Joe; I've won my bet.'

Some of the men now tried again to quiet him, but he became violent, and struck at them with a mad fury, shouting at the top of his voice.

And now the landlord interfered. He had been panic-struck before, as well he might have been, at the frightful termination of the iniquitous contest which, for the love of gain, he had permitted to take place in his house.

The tumult which Richard's violence and loud shouting had occasioned, added to his alarm. He began to talk in a maudlin strain of the character of his house; but he did a wiser thing than talk about himself, or his house—he prevailed on two of the stoutest of his customers to lay hold of the frantic drunkard, and carry him by main force to his lodging, and when the house was cleared, and quieted, he sent for the coroner.

The inquest was held in due time on the body of Thomas Gulton; and Richard Norman was, as a matter of course, summoned to attend.

His attendance was out of the question. He was lying on his bed, in all the horrors of delirium tremens. The doctor had been sent for, and his medicine had calmed much of the frantic violence of the miserable man; but though he lay more quiet, his mind still wandered. His kind sister-in-law, and the excellent persons in whose house he lodged, took their places by turns in Richard's chamber, for the good doctor had left strict orders that he should not be left alone for a moment.

It was on the Thursday that Richard Norman and Thomas Gulton had met to enter upon that deadly contest. For the two following days and nights Richard lay helpless, and well nigh unconscious, on his bed; at times his mind seemed to regain a faint intelligence; it was like light struggling with the gloom of a clouded sky, dimly shining forth for a little while, and then lost sight of, as the clouds came thickening over it, and all was dark again. He looked at Margaret and knew and spoke to her; but perhaps in a few minutes afterwards he mistook her for Mary, and talked in a rambling way of the time when their former minister used to visit them.

He saw Enoch sitting by his bedside reading the Bible, and he addressed him as his minister, and told him that he had made up his mind to give over drinking, and come regularly, with his wife and children, to church; and soon after his thoughts were off to the Green Dragon, the scene of his former revellings, and he was talking to the landlord and his pot-companions there.

'Well, how are you, Mrs. Jones, and how's the master this morning? it's cold, isn't it?—but you keep a famous fire here. What will I please to take? Why I think a little fresh drink would do me no harm, just half a pint, or so. Well, yes, you may put a drop of gin into it, just, as you say, to keep out the cold.—Well, Jerry, how be'n you? just come in to wet your whistle? Eh, lad, but you'll catch it when you get home; your missis won't stand it like my poor Mary.—The parson coming down the street! well, who cares? He's not coming in here, and if he does, he's not going to meddle or make with me. This is liberty hall, ain't it, Mrs. Jones?' Then there was a smothered laugh.

At another time he woke moaning and murmuring in a low voice, 'Gone! yes, she's dead and gone—I knew it when it came out of the dark hedge—that white, white figure. I couldn't pass it, and it came and looked me in the face, and it was Mary; and, when I reached home, there she lay upon the bed, dying, dying away—I killed her, the minister said I did, and he said true. But she never said a harsh word; she smiled with her tender love upon me to the last.'

Thus passed two days and two nights. At length the delirium seemed to wear itself out, and he sank into a quiet sleep. He awoke on the evening of the Lord's day, composed, but not refreshed. The powers of his mind were restored, but his bodily exhaustion was extreme. The doctor was sitting by his bedside, and his fingers were on Richard's pulse.

'What's the matter, sir?' he said, looking at Mr. L—— for some moments; 'why am I in bed? and why are you here? Have I been ill?'

'You are very ill, Richard, and you must take this medicine instantly, or you will soon be gone. I feared just now, from the state of your pulse, that you were sinking, and would die in your sleep.'

'I wish I had died; it would have been better.'

'*No*,' said the doctor; and the firm, solemn tone of that 'no' startled Richard. 'No, it would not have been better; it would have been far worse. Thank God you did not die in your sleep, or in the state in which you have been lying for the last two days.'

'What state?' said Richard.

'Delirium tremens.'

'How?—why?—what has happened?'

'Ask no more questions now. Enoch will give you some nourishment, and you must take it, and another glass of that cordial, and then he will answer your questions.'

'What's the matter, Enoch? What have I been about? Ah! I have it now. I remember we sat down to drink, I and Tom. We had a bet to see which could hold out the longest and outdrink the other, and I drank till my senses left me. What was the end of it, I wonder? Poor Tom! What's become of Tom? He was a fine young man, and strong to what I am. I was the worst of the two. I dared him and jeered at him. I was the biggest fool, and fools make a mock of sin. Poor Tom! has he called here? or is he ill—done up, as I am?'

'Tom fell back from the table,' said Enoch; 'you ought to know it, and I must tell you the truth—Tom fell back, and when they took him up, he was dead.'

Richard started up with a cry of agony. He sat up in the

bed supporting himself upon his two arms, but they shook and trembled under his weight. His eyes were staring and his mouth gaping. Enoch saw that he was falling. His arm was quickly around him. He laid him gently down. He wiped away the cold sweat which streamed over his face and forehead.

'I feared the shock would quite upset you,' he said, mildly, 'but it was right to tell you all.'

'Yes, yes, it was right; but, oh, poor Tom, I have been thy murderer. I have helped to send thy soul to the judgment bar.' He groaned in the agony of his soul, then lay silent, and the tears gushed out from his closed eyelids.

'Shall I read to you, Richard?' said Enoch: 'let me read, it will do you good now.' Richard opened his eyes at the sound of Enoch's calm, kind voice.

'Read to me? No, no, what have I to do with that blessed book? It is not for such as I. I have sinned against the light, and now it is all dark. I knew the right as well as any man, but I loved the wrong, and I would do it; and here I am, broken down and broken-hearted, a trouble to you, and a disgrace to every one, and'—he added drearily—'lost for ever.'

'Let me read to you,' said Enoch again. 'It is not for me, or any mortal man, to deal with one in your state, Richard; but hear the word of the Lord.'

'Read if you will, friend,' he replied; 'let me hear my sentence out of the book. I have been thinking of it; it is just and true, and I deserve it. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."* It is a just sentence,' he added, in a low, hollow voice. 'What can you tell me to gainsay those awful words? they come home to my conscience. He writeth bitter things against me.'

* Proverbs xxix. 1.

'It is a just sentence, Richard; it is God's truth, as to your state. You have often been reproved, and you have hardened your neck. But have you been suddenly destroyed? You are now a dying man; but the Lord, who has borne so long with you, has given you a little longer time. Make use of the time which you have, it may be very short; cry to him for mercy—for mercy to the last; pray to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin. Is anything too hard for the Lord? It is written that the backslider shall be filled with his own ways,* but it is also written, "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity;" and hear what is added, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." '†

The good man repeated these words in a very slow but impressive voice. He then opened his Bible, and read in the same slow and solemn manner: 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'‡ He paused—but he said nothing; he lifted up his heart in silent prayer. He pleaded in prayer the same portions of the word of God he had been reading to Richard. He prayed that they might be brought home to the troubled conscience and the sinking heart of the miserable man. He grounded all his plea upon the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. He prayed that

* Prov. xiv. 14. † Hosea xiv. 1, 2, 4. ‡ Isaiah lv. 6—9.

the conscience of his guilty brother might be purged in that living blood which cleanseth from all sin.

He ceased praying, and rose from his knees. He stood for a little while by the bedside of the wretched man. Richard at first did not seem to notice him.

'Thank you, thank you,' he said, at length; 'thank you for praying for me. I am sure you feel for me, but I cannot pray, I cannot feel for myself. It is all dark to me. I am lost. I have sinned against the light. I have gone on sinning against my own soul; and my heart is like a stone. You don't know how vile and bad I am: mine is no common case. I must think over all you have told me,' added Richard, 'but I don't dare to take comfort even from these Scriptures. I have been so often reproved, and have so hardened myself, that I don't dare to say I have any hope. I seem under the power of Giant Despair! I think the Lord has at last given me up. Oh for one little ray of light! I wonder you can care to pray for such a wretch as I am, or to read that blessed book to me.'

There was a sadness, a hopelessness in the tone in which he spoke that went to the heart of his kind and godly friend. The tears filled his eyes as he stood and looked at the miserable man.

'Richard,' he said, when he was able to speak calmly, 'I say again, is anything too hard for the Lord? I would not deceive you. I would not have you deceive yourself; but beware that you do not add sin to sin. You must not doubt but that the Lord *can* have compassion on the chief of sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. While you are still here, while you have still breath, you can humbly ask for pardon; you can cry, "O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." This was David's prayer, and surely you may take the same words, and go with them to God. The words are, "For thy name's sake

pardon my iniquity, for it is great." The greater it is, the more will Divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it. It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins. Your heart is as hard as a stone. God grant that it may be in your case as it has been with so many sinners against their own souls, that where sin has abounded grace did much more abound.'

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Enoch said no more; but he did not close his Bible. Though he thought it right to urge the promises of God's precious word upon the wretched man, his own heart sank within him, and he himself did not dare to hope.

Hour after hour passed away. Richard had fallen asleep, and though from time to time he woke with a start, and his groans and heavy sighs told something of his inward sufferings, he said not a word, he noticed no one. Martha came, and then Margaret, and by turns they and Enoch watched beside him. The doctor came again on the Monday. He had scarcely expected to find Richard alive, but he found him better.

'His strength of constitution is astonishing,' he said to Enoch, who had gone down with him to the room below. 'I know not what to think of the case. He is certainly stronger than when I last saw him.'

For the few minutes that Enoch was down stairs, Richard had been left alone. When he returned to the chamber, Richard was on his knees by the bedside. He had not heard Enoch enter, and quietly his kind friend withdrew into the passage waiting, and watching him there, through the partly closed door. With broken words and strong cries, Richard was calling upon the Lord. Long did he kneel and wrestle in prayer, the tears streaming down his ghastly face, and his voice at times choked with sobs; at last he fell to the ground.

He had fainted. Then Enoch went in, and lifted him up, and laid him on the bed. He gave him the cordial which the doctor had left for him. He drank, however, but a few drops, and in a whisper he entreated Enoch to call his wife and Margaret. They came up, and he took their hands and that of Enoch, and in the same low whisper he thanked them for all their goodness to him. Enoch motioned to them to kneel down with him, and he prayed.

The silence which succeeded that simple, solemn prayer continued for some length of time, unbroken. The sun had set, and the darkness of the night was coming on; but no one stirred or spoke. It was quite dark, and Enoch stole from the room and returned with a lighted candle. Shading the light with his hand, he drew near to the bed. Richard was not asleep, his eyes were wide open. He turned a look of agony upon Enoch—a look, which Enoch could never forget; his lips moved as if to speak, but no sound was now heard—the power of speech was quite gone. It was an awful season. The Bar of Iron lay for the last time in the furnace-fire, for the last time upon the anvil. What was the result? They that stood around the bed of the dying man marked the working of his haggard features, and the stare of his glazing eyes, but they were not permitted to know whether hope ever entered his troubled soul. His inward state was hidden from them. Whatever his thoughts or his feelings were as he drew near to the limits of the visible and invisible world, he had no longer the power to express them. At length the shadow of death closed over the flickering light of his expiring life. The immortal tenant of that breathless corpse had departed;—but whither?—who could tell?—God knoweth.

It was not till several years after the death of Richard Norman, that his former minister was able to obtain any informa-

tion as to the circumstances of his departure, and the state of mind in which he died. He had paid several visits to some friends in the parish of H——t. He had once seen Richard. He had heard with sorrow of heart that his habit of drunkenness still continued, and that his motherless children were neglected. He had written the first tract to show to him, as in a looking-glass, the course of his life, with a faint hope that the portrait of himself might alarm and awaken him, and with earnest prayer that the Lord might bless the tract to his conversion; but when the tract was sent to him in Shropshire, that he might put it into the hands of Richard Norman, he learned that the wretched man was dead. Where he had died, however, he could not hear. Richard had long before left H——t, and gone off on the tramp to some other part of the country: that was all the information to be obtained. The writer afterwards learned that he had died at R——c, near Wellington. He wrote to Margaret and to the clergyman of her parish, but she mislaid his letter, and could not reply to it. The clergyman did write, but he was recovering from a fit of illness, and promised, when able to collect the particulars of Richard's last hours, to send another letter—but the letter never came. Not long ago, being again in Shropshire, the writer determined to go himself to R——c, and find out Margaret, and hear from her of Richard's coming thither and of his death.

The tract had awakened an interest in many of its readers, and frequent inquiries had been made as to the conclusion of the story of the 'Bar of Iron.' He is now enabled to publish the end of the narrative.

The facts above related are chiefly from the lips of Margaret, who had been fully informed of all particulars. The writer met her at the door of her house with a skep of coals on her head, and received a hearty welcome to her bright hearth, and

warm, comfortable dwelling. Her heart was full, and her tears flowed fast when she heard that he was the minister who had attended her poor Mary to the last. With her he went to the Christian friends in whose house Richard Norman had died, and as they walked together through the narrow lanes of R——c, Margaret would stop one after another of her neighbours to say, 'This is the minister who was with my poor Mary when she died.' With her he went also to see the grave of Richard—it was then truly a dishonoured grave—no mound had been raised above it, no patch of greensward covered it, but the loose stony gravel lay level over the spot. There was nothing to mark the last earthly resting-place of that miserable victim of his own sin. The writer paid the small sum Margaret had been too poor to afford, to have a mound of grass placed over the grave of Richard Norman. The tract of 'The Bar of Iron' was not known at R——c, and the writer sent several copies to Margaret for distribution amongst her neighbours. The following letter was received by the writer from one of them. It may be interesting to some of the readers of the two tracts, as containing the testimony of its pious writer to the character of 'poor Mary,' and to her husband's course of cruelty and guilt.

'REV. AND DEAR SIR, *May 4th*, 1854.

'At the request of Margaret ——, to whom I live a neighbour, I presume to address a few lines to you, trusting they will find you and yours in a good state of health, and very comfortable and happy. She wishes me to acknowledge the copies of the tract called "The Bar of Iron," and is much obliged for them. She has lent them to the neighbours to read, and they express great satisfaction in reading them. I have carefully, prayerfully, and attentively read the tract myself, and have been

pleased and profited by the reading. My pleasure was enhanced by my having had a personal knowledge of the persons (Richard and Mary) whom the tract describes. I employed Richard for a considerable length of time, a few years before his death. He was always a thoughtless, drunken man, and as he lived, I fear so he died—though sure we cannot limit the mercy of God. Mary was naturally of a mild and amiable disposition; but from the tract it appears that grace had wonderfully improved and beautified what nature had given. While reading the tract I was greatly enamoured with the sweet, tender, and affectionate disposition and conduct of Mary towards her husband. I could not refrain offering short, fervent, ejaculatory prayer to God, that the number of such pious, affectionate, tender, and industrious wives might be multiplied. Our earth would then become a paradise. Lord, hasten the time, amen!

'I am requested to name the best respects of Margaret —— and family to you and yours, for the kindness you have manifested towards them, and especially to poor Mary, deceased. Be pleased to overlook every imperfection in the writing and composition of this letter, and believe me, dear sir, yours in the bonds of Christian brotherhood,

'R———c, 'THOMAS ———.
Near Wellington,
Shropshire.'

It may be well that some of the readers of this tract—such, I mean, as have entered upon a like course to that of Richard Norman—should hear something of the neglected children of the drunkard. The eldest lost an excellent situation owing to his dishonesty; but when the writer saw him last, he had regained his character, and was working with a blacksmith at W——; he was then a fine, industrious young man. The

youngest became a common thief. The tract of 'The Bar of Iron' was sent to him by the writer, when he was in Stafford gaol, on the charge of having stolen a carpet-bag. It was read to him, and his eyes rained tears over the sufferings of his mother; but on his coming out of prison, he went back to his evil courses. He joined himself to a gang of housebreakers—probably some of those who had been his associates in gaol. He boasted that he could make more money by theft and housebreaking than by the earnings of honest industry, and that he preferred the ways he had chosen. He was tried and found guilty at Shrewsbury assizes, and is now a transported felon.

The children of Mary Norman were the children of her prayers; may her prayers yet be answered, and may the neglected children whom she was not spared to watch over, and to train in the path of life in which she walked, be brought to the saving knowledge of that adorable Redeemer who came to seek and to save that which was lost!—may they be washed in the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin!

PSHAWLAND.

'They mocked the messengers of God, and despised *His* words.'
2 CHRON. xxxvi. 16.

'YOU talk much of California, and Australia,' said a venerable man. He had been sitting in silence, while the rest of the men were speaking with much animation, and with looks of deep and wondering earnestness, about those far off lands of gold. Very different was the expression of his calm and thoughtful countenance. He had waited till they had exhausted their subject, and told all they knew, and had made many of their remarks over and over again. There was a pause; and the old man suddenly looked up and said with a searching glance, 'Have you ever heard of Pshawland?'

'No, never,' said some of the company, answering together.

'Well, I should have thought you had. It is my native country. I was born there.

And you may like to hear something about the people—they are a strange set.'

'You born there, Palmer?' said one of the men. 'I thought you were an Englishman.'

'Well, well, leave that question alone. I tell you I was born in Pshawland; and there I passed the best, or rather the worst years of my life. But there it was that I was led to think of the folly and sin in which I lived, and of my forgetfulness of God; and to embrace with my whole heart the Christian faith.'

'Don't cant to us about your religion,' cried several of his hearers; 'for if you do we shall be off. Pshaw! we have heard too much of that.'

With calm boldness, he turned his eyes stedfastly from one to another of them—

'Shall I tell you about Pshawland; or will you be off? You may go if you please.'

'But if we choose to stay?' said one of them.

'Then I may choose to tell you.'

'Where is Pshawland?' said a tall heavy man, with a dull countenance, named Muggridge. 'Tell us first where it is; and what does the name mean?'

'Where is England, and what does the name mean?' replied the old man.

His hearers stood silent for awhile, and then one of them cried out, 'England is here;' and another said, 'England is England, and means England, I suppose.'

'So much for your geography,' said Palmer; 'you are vastly clever fellows to be able to give no better account of your own country, and of the reason why it is called England. What if I say, Pshawland is here, and Pshawland means Pshawland? Never mind where it is. I will tell you all in good time, but not now.'

'Well,' said the men, 'take your own way: only we won't have your religion crammed down us. Stand to that bargain. As much of Pshawland as you please, that is, as much as we may like to hear.'

'The country is a fine country—in parts a very fine country,' said Palmer; 'but like some other countries,* France for instance, which you talk about in such grand style, there is no king in Pshawland.'

'All the better for Pshawland,' cried one of the men with a large head and a strong voice, but a dwarfish body.

'All the worse, my good friend,' said the old man, 'according to your own view of things; for the King, though absent from the country when I was there, was not far off: and from time to time the people were panic-struck because tidings were brought that he had collected an army, and was about to come down with a force which they would be unable to oppose.'

'I doubt, then,' said one of the men, 'if you can say much for that same king. Take my word for it, Palmer, he is a tyrant—all kings are tyrants.'

'There you are mistaken,' he replied; 'since I left the country I have met with those who know the King, and they all spoke highly in his praise. I never heard him called a tyrant, except in Pshawland. But the fact is, that while he was absent in another part of his dominions, the people of Pshawland upset the government which he had left to keep things in order; and the country when I was there was in a state of sad disorder.'

'Well,' said the little man with the large head, 'all the better, I say again, for Pshawland.'

'All the worse, I say again,' replied Palmer, with a voice of calm authority, 'for there was no self-government that I could find in any one of the people there: every man did that which

* This was written at the time of the last Revolution in France.

was right in his own eyes; that is, every man did as he pleased, which is only another way of saying that every man did that which was wrong, when it pleased or suited him to do so. They called it liberty; but I found out to my cost that such a state of things is licence, not liberty.'

'Well, I don't see that,' cried the tall heavy man.

'You may not see it,' replied Palmer, 'but you cannot disprove the fact. There is no true liberty when there is no law to keep knaves in order: men who live under the best laws are apt to differ, but there is then some wholesome restraint put upon the will of all men. Take away the safeguard of law, and every man would have the uncontrolled exercise of his own will. Then one man's will would be always coming in the way of another's, might would overcome right, the weakest would go to the wall, justice would be banished—it was often so in Pshawland: the strongest took what he liked, and kept what he took.'

'There is some reason in what you say, friend Palmer,' said the little man, who had been looking down on his own feeble limbs, where not a muscle was to be seen.

'Hold your tongue, Petit,' bawled out a huge man who had not spoken before; he had a broad square forehead and an athletic frame, and rising from his seat, and stretching his brawny limbs, he came forward. 'Come, speak up, man,' he said as he went up to Palmer; 'speak up, my hearty old cock,' and he struck the slight old man on the back with the open palm of his broad iron hand; 'let us hear more of this same Pshawland,' he cried: 'I like the place, and I like the people; I'm thinking of emigrating, and I may as well go there as to any other place that I know of, and don't you interrupt, Petit. Why man,' he said, turning to Palmer, 'you are not hurt, are you? it was but a friendly slap on the back I gave you—it only meant that I liked your talk; there's my

hand and a hearty shake, old fellow. I like this same liberty-land vastly.'

'It is not liberty-land, but licence-land,' replied Palmer: 'I'll give you a fact or two to prove my words. A set of men at a factory struck for wages; they wanted an unreasonable sum, as you would say if you heard how much they asked for. The master of the factory had raised their wages several times, and he told them he could stand it no longer, so he would not give them the unheard-of sum which they demanded; and what did the fellows do?'

'Smashed his mills and his machinery,' said the little man with the large head, 'and they did right.'

'You of course would say so, Petit, for you have helped to do as much in this country; but they did worse, they broke open their master's house, and helped themselves to his money, and his plate, and drank his wine.'

'Capital fellows!' cried Muggridge.

'Some of them were taken up and tried for the offence,' said Palmer, 'but the rest of them beat the witnesses, and bribed the judge with their master's money; and as two of the policemen, whom they had forgotten to beat or to bribe, were interfering to save a miserable witness whom they had half killed, they set upon them and beat them too so cruelly, that the three men, namely, the witness and the two policemen, were carried to the hospital, where one of the latter died that same night.'

'It was their own fault,' said the strong man, whose name was Burley; 'it served the fellows right; what did they interfere for? I've thrashed a policeman before now, and will again.'

'So much for liberty,' said Palmer.

'Why, what was there, after all, so bad in the affair?' cried Petit; 'accidents will happen; the master was to

blame, as most masters are. Had he paid the men the wages they wanted, nothing of the kind would have happened.'

'Only they would have been their master's master,' said Palmer; 'but I'll give you another fact. A man whom I knew—he lived next door to me—had a good-looking wife, as pleasant a little body as you ever saw; another man in the same street—a married man with a family—took a fancy for that same wife of my neighbour's, and, without making much ado about the matter, he turned his own wife and children out of doors, and walked into my neighbour's house, and took away his wife by main force. The husband fought for her like a lion, but the other man won the battle, and carried off his prize.'

'As bad as piracy on the high seas,' cried Burley; 'I should like to see the man that would set his foot within my doors to take away my wife. He should not try the game a second time.'

'But if you were a little man, and out of health, as I am,' said Petit, 'you would get beaten yourself, and lose your wife into the bargain.'

'That, however,' said Palmer, quietly, 'is what they do in Pshawland. There is another fact which will give you some notion of the ways of the wiseheads in Pshawland,' continued Palmer. 'There was a nobleman who had a large estate there. It was in a beautiful part of the country, and very fertile. His tenants held a consultation together, and agreed that it was not fair for one man to hold so much property, and to have so many broad acres, while they had only their cottage gardens.'

'They were right there,' said Petit.

'Were they right,' said Palmer, 'when the estate had come to him from his father, and had been in the possession of the family for some hundred years? But that is not the question

before us. These tenants came to a determination that they would turn him out; and they did so, telling him he might go and live in another house which he had a hundred miles off. There were no laws in that part of Pshawland to protect him, and the nobleman was obliged to yield. Then those men proceeded to put a scheme of theirs into execution: which was, to divide the land into equal parts, and to share it between themselves.'

'A capital plan,' said Petit, 'and just what we are wishing to do, I and my friends here; and what we mean to do. The time is not far distant when we shall be masters in the field; and we think of taking the Marquis of ———'s estate, as the nearest and best bit of ground, into our hands. He has had it long enough; and when the reign of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" begins, we shall treat him as an equal and a brother, and not allow him to be a lord or a master any longer. He shall have his share with us, but no more.'

'Well done, Petit,' said Burley; 'you have brains enough in that big head of yours, and book learning for the head work. And I have strength enough,' he added, stretching out his brawny arm, 'to do the body work. And I say, Palmer, you shall have a share: there will be pretty pickings at the house, for we will share that too.'

'Not I,' said Palmer; 'I saw enough of such sharings and doings when I lived in Pshawland, as I was going to tell you.'

'Well, get on with your story,' said Burley.

'The tenants divided the land, share and share alike, each man got fifty acres. There was some disputing as to who should have the poor land, and who the rich. But they got through this difficulty by casting lots; and though the men that were to have the poor land muttered and looked sulky, they had agreed beforehand to abide by the settlement: so they did.'

'To be sure,' said Petit, 'and so they would. Honour among thieves,' he added, laughing, 'is a true proverb, I always think.'

'For the first year,' continued Palmer, 'all went on pretty well among the "thieves," as you rightly call them.'

'Thieves!' said Burley fiercely, 'they were not thieves, they only took the land they had a right to.'

'You call breaking into a dwelling-house and stealing money from the owners thieving, don't you, my friend?' said Palmer.

'Why, yes, to be sure I do,' said Burley, scratching his shock head of coarse hair.

'But where is the difference, Burley, if you take anything which belonged to another man, and did not belong to you—let it be money, or land, or your faithful wife?'

'Humph!' said Burley, looking somewhat posed.

'But,' argued Petit, 'land is another question: nature gives every man his just right to the land.'

'Hold *your* tongue for the present,' said Burley; 'you won't let the man speak. Go on, Palmer.'

'Some of the tenants—thieves I should say—were idle fellows, others had no objection to work: it was the idle ones, however, who set the scheme afloat of seizing the land. Those same idle gentlemen began to get tired of their fifty acres, or rather of working on the land. It was after their harvest corn was got in. A party of these men had met together at a public-house; two or three of the party stopped there from morning till night for a fortnight or more, only going home to sleep; sometimes indeed they sat up drinking all the night. They drank out all their money. At the end of the time one of the men proposed to go on to their land, and clear it for a fresh crop. "Not I," said another; "I have made up my mind to sell twenty of my acres; less will do for

me: who will bid for it?" "I will," said a man, one of the same party, who had only been drinking at chance times, and who had come in just then for half a pint. "Let's have an auction," said the former man; "get you on a chair," he cried to the landlord, "and be auctioneer for once in your life, and put up my twenty acres." The twenty acres were knocked down to the highest bidder, the man who had come in for half a pint. He took out his canvass bag, and paid the money down out of hand. "There," said the seller, chucking one of the pieces of gold just paid to him to the landlord, "give us all as much drink as that little shiner will pay for." This man's example was soon after followed by several of the party, and some of the set had now seventy or eighty acres.

'Ten years passed on; at the end of that time a great deal of the land had changed masters; some men had got a hundred acres, one had two hundred, but many had but a few rods, and indeed some had no land at all. According to your proverb, Petit, "Honour among thieves," the buyers had bought their additional land fairly enough, and some had grown rich, and become more and more steady, and began to talk of the rights of property and such things. But now came a new proposal: the old cry was raised by the idle ones who had no land or very little, and they called out for a new division of the land, and insisted on their right—a right given, as they said and as you say, Petit, by nature to every man. It happened that some ten or twenty of the men had died and left their property to their children; and they, these sons, did not understand how it could be fair to touch the property left them by will, after having been fairly bought by their fathers, and made valuable by industry and good farming. But the cry was raised, "Share and share alike; every man has a right to his share of the land," and so the upshot of it was that the land was seized again, and shared again, though not without much

violence and one death. Things again went on after this division for another five years; then there came the same cry, "Share the land, share and share alike;" and so they go on at Pshawland. The same scheme has been carried on in many parts of the country, and some of the people grew at last so angry, that they took ship and went to other lands, carrying their property with them, when they could manage to do so. So much for the ways of Pshawland! There is no honour even among thieves in that country.

'You see,' added Palmer, 'that the people of Pshawland, from what I told you of them, are a strange people; but not the wisest folks in the world: full of schemes, and very wise in their own eyes; vain of their talents, which, I think you will agree with me, are not much worthy of the name of talents. A set of ignorant, wilful, and unruly schoolboys might have schemed as cleverly, and showed as little regard to justice as some of my old companions in Pshawland. And they did not happen to succeed in any of their boasted plans; they contrived to put things into a state of confusion, and generally to increase the disorder which they had created.

'There was always some new scheme afloat. Every one was wiser than his neighbour; that is, in his own conceit—no great proof of wisdom. All the good old tried institutions were found fault with, and every one was for taking the law into his own hands. At one time there was a party making a loud outcry against taxation, and then the very same party got into power, and doubled the taxes. At another time a common fund was proposed, and orders were given that all people should come forward and put their whole property into this common fund. Only a few were found to consent to this; some buried their plate, and all their valuables; others left the country, carrying all they had with them; those that remained pretended poverty. Then the shopkeepers began to

complain, for no one ordered expensive articles, or costly goods; this set the workmen at their wits' end, and there were outbreaks among them, and cries of starvation. In this crisis a smart little man came forward with a plan for national workshops, and his plan was hailed with enthusiasm as the great discovery of the age. The said workshops were immediately opened, and all who chose to work in them were paid a certain sum daily. But the scheme did not succeed when it came to be tried; the cleverest fellows soon began to grumble because they received no higher payment than the stupid and clumsy workmen; and some hurried over their work in a slovenly and careless way, or left it half done; others would not work at all after the first few weeks, but wandered about in idleness, dressed in the fine clothes which they got made, and paid for with promises. Then there were heaps of goods of all descriptions piled up in the warehouses, which nobody cared to buy; and as the vast body of the workmen were paid out of the public treasury, the public workshop scheme soon came to an end, for the government (which was always what they called a provisional government) declared themselves on the eve of bankruptcy, and refused any further payments. Such were some of the schemes and experiments common in Pshawland. I have neither time nor patience to say more about them, nor would you have to hear. There was indeed always some new scheme afloat which looked very fair, and seemed to promise grand results on paper, but turned out to be miserably disappointing when actually tried: theories which wore about them the show of extraordinary wisdom while they remained in their visionary garb, but were found to be inconceivably absurd when put to the practical proof.'

The old man had paused; a deep seriousness came into his face, and he said gravely, and with great earnestness, 'I must now give you an account of a mournful event that occurred in Pshawland—the deliberate murder of one who sought with his whole heart to do good. It is a sad, sad story; and perhaps you may not like to hear it.'

'Is it a very horrible story?' said a man who had not spoken before. He had till then been deeply absorbed in poring over the particulars of a horrible murder, in the columns of a voluminous and much-begrimed Sunday newspaper, and had heard very little of the foregoing conversation. 'Is it a very horrible story?' said this man, whose name was Grimshaw; 'because if it is, let us have it.'

'It is indeed,' replied Palmer; 'I never heard of a blacker deed.

'A stranger came among us, into Pshawland, and followed for a time the same business as myself.'

'What might your craft be then?' said Grimshaw.

'What is it now?' said Palmer. And he cast his eyes downward to the end of the two-foot rule which projected from his trousers pocket.

'What, you were a carpenter there then?' said Grimshaw.

'To be sure I was,' answered Palmer. 'The stranger, however, was very different from any man I have ever met with before or since.'

'And yet a common sort of a man,' said Grimshaw.

'If you mean, by a common sort of a man, that he wore the same clothes, that he ate the same food, and was as poor as myself, why, then he was a common sort of a man; but putting aside the circumstances in which he was placed, he was no common man. I never saw his equal, and never shall again. He had such a mild, and yet manly way with him; such a kind, and yet convincing manner of talking to one, that when he

took the pains to set a thing before me, I never could get over the gentle force of his arguments: and though I sometimes tried to hide from him the effect of his words, I always came round to his opinion in my heart. He had always some plan on foot for the good of those around him: he seemed only to live to do good.'

'He had many plans for the good of the people, I suppose,' said Petit; 'such another now, I dare say, as the great Fourriere'—

'As unlike him,' said Palmer, with a mild and stedfast gravity in his deep-set eyes, 'as you, Petit, are unlike'—

'Unlike,' said Grimshaw, 'as you, Petit, are unlike an angel.'—

'Who talks of angels here?' said Muggridge. 'We do not believe in angels. Who ever saw an angel, I should like to know?'

'You may see one there,' said Grimshaw, pointing with a contemptuous smile to the newly-painted sign of the Angel public-house, at the end of the street. Palmer looked graver than usual, and was silent.

'Well,' said Grimshaw, with a laugh, 'don't you mean to go on with your story?'

'Certainly not,' replied Palmer, 'if you make a jest on what I deem sacred subjects. I do not provoke you by attacking what I consider your weak prejudices against religion, at least I do not make a jest of them; and as I have as much right to an opinion of my own as you have, I will not allow you to ridicule my prejudices, as you may consider them if you please.'

'Halloa, man,' cried Petit, 'you set yourself up for a religious man, do you?'

'I only grieve,' said Palmer, firmly, 'that I have so little religion; but what I have I am not ashamed to own; and that

is no news to any of you. I believe in my good and gracious God and Saviour from my heart.'

A roar of voices burst forth at this announcement, but the stentorian voice of Burley rose above them all. 'Silence! silence!' he shouted, 'silence and fair play! Palmer is an honest fellow, and I admire his spirit! He has a right to speak out for what he thinks right; and whether right or wrong in his opinions (I think him wrong), he is right in standing up bravely for them: come, my fine old chap, let us hear the end of your story.' A murmur was heard from the rest of the party, but Burley looked round upon them all with a dark frown, and as it subsided, he smiled, and said, 'Go on, Palmer, it was only the ground-swell after that bit of a storm; never heed it, man, you will hear no more of it.'

'What was the name of your friend, Palmer?' said Grimshaw.

'Never mind his name now,' replied Palmer, 'I will tell you all in good time; I will tell you who and what he really was: but first let me say again, I never knew a good man nor a wise man till I met with him, or rather till he met with me; for it was he who sought me out. I was all that time as bad a character as any one in Pshawland, and he had been present on several occasions when I was cheating some of my fellow workmen. He had seen me give way to many a fit of brutal rage when charged with my dishonest practices, and had heard me deny the offence with loud curses and threats. I shall never forget his look or his words when he first spoke to me. He spoke with authority, but with a gentleness and kindness which I could not withstand. There was truth, and this I felt, in his every word—truth which brought conviction along with it. He made me feel ashamed of myself, and yet he made me love him.

'From that time he was often with me. I learned to know

his knock at my door. He would come in the evening to my house, and sup with me: and then he would discourse with me about the life I was leading with such wisdom and meekness, and make me feel that he understood me, even better than I understood myself, that I used to sit silent from sheer astonishment that any one could so exactly read my heart; and then, in the midst of my astonishment, he would show such a deep and tender sorrow for me, and speak in so sweet and winning a way, that I was often quite overcome, and melted even to tears. He was a poor man, poorer than I was, for I had a house of my own, and he had only a poor lodging, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another; but I felt it an honour when he would come under my roof.

'I was not the only one in Pshawland that learned to love him. Several of my poorer neighbours began to be as much attached to him as I was. He had spoken, indeed, to many more, for he never lost an opportunity of seeking to instruct and benefit others: but some were offended, and others mocked; a few here and there heard him gladly, and really loved him. I, for my part, wondered at his boldness in a country like Pshawland, but he knew not what fear was; he was bold as a lion.'

'How could that be?' said Petit, with a sneer; 'why, you said just now he was such a meek, soft kind of man.

'I said meek,' replied Palmer; 'I made use of no such words as a soft kind of man; those are your own words, Petit. But you have yet to learn, I suppose, as I had till I knew him, that the man who is really brave is usually gentle; and he was both. The meekness and innocence of the dove was the spirit within him—the gentleness of the lamb, and yet the courage of the lion; but of the lamb and of the lion as they are described in certain old writings which he gave me, when the lordly lion has no fierceness, and the lamb has lost its fearful-

ness, and they dwell together. Men, however, are usually influenced by circumstances, and those in which this good man was placed were poverty and obscurity, and this, joined to his humble mind, and simple, quiet ways, caused him to be despised by those who thought much of rank and riches. And yet there was a plain manliness, a calm, sweet dignity, about his look and manner, which kept off all undue familiarity, while it led those who knew and loved him, to treat him with respect and even reverence. His influence increased, and many of the most daring and unruly men among us were won over by him from their selfish and quarrelsome habits of life, and became kind to one another, and anxious to restore order in their families and around them.

'Just at this time a rumour got abroad that the only Son of the absent King of Pshawland had set out with an army to take possession of the country. Some said that he had actually arrived, and was hidden in a distant part of the kingdom, waiting for an opportunity to declare himself, and to take possession of the throne in his own name, and in that of his Father. This report caused no small stir among us, and the men who at that time held the reins of the government and did pretty much as they pleased, committing many deeds of tyranny under the mask of liberty, became much disturbed, knowing that they should be called to account. Every stranger was looked upon with suspicion; and the noble-minded but humble man whose influence had become so great among us, did not escape.

'Some of us, the friends and associates of the good man, began also to have our suspicions. He evidently knew something of the proceedings of the Prince, for he had often spoken to us about the absent King, and had given us a very different impression of his character from that which we had before entertained. He had told us that the King was just and good,

that he loved his rebellious people and wished to see them happy; that if he were to return, though he would certainly assert his authority and claim his throne, he would forgive all who received him peaceably, and would restore them to his favour; and that he would seek by all right and reasonable ways to make us a contented and prosperous people. He spoke as one well acquainted with the King, but he made no boast of his acquaintance with him; indeed there was nothing of a boastful character about aught that he said or did.

'A few of us were together one pleasant summer evening; it was in a quiet grove, beyond the din of the city, at the foot of a mountain. We were resting after the heat of the day under the shade of the spreading trees, and enjoying the cool freshness of the night breezes. Our discourse turned upon the man whose goodness and kindness of heart had so endeared him to us all; when he entered the field. He was not alone; but some of his friends, and our friends, were with him.

'This field was a favourite resort of his, and he and his little company had come thither, as we had done, to seek the retirement of its green slopes and leafy shades. He came up to us, and, after his first friendly salutation, he remained for some minutes silently regarding us. A beautiful smile lit up his usually grave and thoughtful countenance, as he said, "My friends, I have an announcement to make to you. You will hear it with surprise. You see before you the Son of your absent King; I am the Prince about whom so many reports have reached you." The astonishment which his words produced was very great; but the ardour and enthusiasm of our love for him was so warm, and so high was the admiration we felt, that had he spoken a word to encourage the spirit which was kindling in our hearts, I believe there was not one of us who would not have armed ourselves in his defence, and

rushed forth to proclaim him as our Sovereign, and fought till we had fallen under his banner. Doubtless he saw the warlike ardour with which we received his words, for with all his calm self-possession, he said mildly, "I am the Prince of peace; I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save. I speak, dear friends, in my Father's name, and my own, when I say that our first desire is to reign in your hearts, and in the hearts of all your countrymen. If they will not receive the King my Father, then, but not till then, will he whet his sword, and punish those who oppose themselves to his just rights. He has the power to enforce obedience, and to put down rebellion and disaffection by the strong arm of his authority; but that will be his last resort. He will seek to overcome the enmity of his opposers rather by love than by fear." '

The old man paused: 'You have heard enough for the present of my strange history,' he said; 'you may like to hear the rest another time.'

But Burley, who had been sitting on a bench opposite him, his head supported between his two hands, and his eyes fixed earnestly on the face of the speaker, said, 'If you are not tired, my good old friend, let us hear it all;' and then he added, with a smile of wonderful sweetness, 'I like your story well, and I like the man you have told us about, the Prince as you say he was, the only good sort of Prince I ever heard of.'

'And the murder,' cried Grimshaw, impatiently, 'you have not told us of the murder: come, Palmer, go on. The best part of your story has to be told: I am longing to hear of the murder.'

A shudder seemed to pass over the frame of the old man, and tears gathered into his eyes and fell slowly over his furrowed cheeks, but his calmness did not forsake him:

'You will hear of the murder soon enough,' he said

solemnly; 'it was a dark and horrible deed, a crime of the blackest dye.'

'Don't mind Grimshaw,' said Burley, gravely, 'but go on, Palmer.'

Palmer continued his story.

'The words of the Prince had filled us with astonishment, and with love; and from that time, and after the discourse with which he followed up what he had already said, something of his own peaceful spirit seemed to be given to us. Yet, it was wonderful to see the effect of his wise and gentle counsels and his example upon such a set as we had been till he came among us. He spoke to men whose temper and passions had been like the sea in a storm. He said, "Peace, be still; and there was a great calm." Would that it had been thus with the rest of the people in Pshawland! It was soon, however, whispered about that the stranger, as he had been called, was the Prince of the country and the heir of the kingdom; and to our surprise, though he made no public declaration as to who and what he was, he went about as usual. He did nothing secretly, but, with the meek fearlessness which distinguished him, he was sometimes in the city, sometimes in the villages, or in the public highways, or lanes of the country, entering into conversation with the people of all ranks, telling all that he met with of his Father's love to them, and of his tender and anxious desire to reign in their hearts. The common people at one time heard him gladly: but you know, or at least I do, how easily turned and unstable the multitude are, how easily turned by the last speaker.'

'Why, I don't know,' said Petit, stepping forward, and interrupting the speaker: 'you are casting a slur upon the people; the strength of a nation lies in the people, and it is not the last speaker, as you say, my good friend, that rouses

them, but the man who sets before them their rights, and proves himself the enlightened and disinterested friend of the people—the man whose spirit burns within him with the pure and glowing flame of patriotic indignation when he beholds them trampled upon. I pause, for I can hardly find words to express my——'

He turned round as he thus spoke, his eye taking a restless and rapid glance of his auditors to see how his address was received; but Burley raised his arm with a commanding gesture, though in his usual rough manner, and said coolly, 'There, that will do, Petit. Sit you down, my little man. We often hear your speeches, and we can hear what you have to say at any time.'

Petit gave another look to the company, but Grimshaw went up to him, and said in a whisper, loud enough however to be heard by all, 'Your news is somewhat stale, my noble orator—that is what Burley meant to say—so take a friend's advice, and sit down;' and suiting the action to the word, he took him by the arm, and dragged him back to his seat, the important little personage looking very angry, and muttering all the while to himself. But nobody heeded him, and Palmer again spoke.

'The multitude,' he continued, 'are easily turned by the last speaker, and so it was with the populace in Pshawland. At one time a great body of them mustered, and they would have taken the Prince by force, and made him their king. On some other occasions, stirred up to fury against him by those in power, they were for laying their hands upon him to put him to death. Still we saw no change in him; he became more grave and sorrowful, but he met all parties with the same loving spirit and the same gentle words: "My Father's chief desire is to reign in your hearts!" Ah, my friends, what greatness of mind, what tenderness there was in him! how

could any one withstand their influence? Some of the worst and vilest of the common rabble, the prostitutes, the very dregs and refuse even of Pshawland, found it impossible to resist his sweet and loving spirit. Men and women, whom every one despised as the dirt under their feet, came and threw themselves down before him, weeping and yet looking up to him with a yearning affection; and when they looked in his face they saw only kindness and pity. He had no proud looks, he spoke no words of contempt and rebuke to them; he never turned away from them; he did not think himself defiled by associating with them.'

'He was a good man,' said Burley, striking his iron first upon the table before him; 'and who will dare to say he was not?'—and with the knuckles of his other hand he brushed away the large tears which were about to start from his eyes. 'He was a good man; and honour be to him, whatever became of him! Well, Palmer, my friend, go on.'

'He was indeed as gentle as a lamb,' said Palmer. 'You should have seen how the little children loved him! Children are quick-sighted to find out those who love them, and often would he take them in his arms, and bless them. Their mothers, indeed, would bring them to him, and ask him to give them his blessing. On one occasion a troop of the little creatures met him with songs of welcome, and their childish voices appeared to be like the sweetest music to his ears. Oh! how much more I could tell you of his loving gentleness, and kindness! and so I will, if you like to hear me, another time; —but I must go on.

'All the affection and regard he met with from a few served but to stir up the bettermost sort of people, as they were called, with a few exceptions, to jealousy and bitter hatred. They hated him, indeed, without a cause; but they did hate him, and they often met together to plot and plan

some way of getting him into their power; but for a while they feared the people—they feared that, if they attempted any open violence, they themselves would be overpowered. There seemed, indeed, for a length of time to be a particular providence over him—seemed, do I say? there *was*, I have no doubt; for during so long a time as, at least, three years, he went about through the length and breadth of the land, speaking his words of love and peace to every one who would hear him. The sum and substance of all was, "My Father seeks only willing subjects; his chief desire is to reign in the hearts of his people." Sometimes the wise men and the great men of Pshawland would come up to him in the city, and sometimes they would go out into the country to seek him; and with smooth looks and oily words they would feign a desire to hear him, or to ask his opinion on particular subjects, which they brought before him only that they might entangle him in his talk. They sought to lay hold on some unguarded word, that they might have a fair plea for accusing him before the people, and getting him into their hands. But he was more than a match for them in his simple wisdom and truth, nor did he ever lose his quiet self-possession; so at last they gave up the attempt, for they always went away put out, and disconcerted, and ashamed, feeling that their purpose was detected and their end defeated. Whatever they really thought of him, they always treated the idea of his being really the Prince of the country with contempt, and gave it out that he was a mere impostor, seeking to ingratiate himself with the lower classes. But one fact is remarkable—no one ever dared to call him a hypocrite: no, nor did I ever see a look of anger on his face, nor hear a hard word from his lips, but when he rebuked a hypocrite; for there were many hypocrites in Pshawland, and they were sometimes forced, in spite of themselves, to quail before the clear and searching glance of his

stedfast eyes, and to shrink and skulk away from his plain-spoken words of truth and power.'

'I love the man with all my heart,' said Burley. 'Prince or no Prince, he is the man for me—the Prince, the King, if you please, Palmer, call him what you will—he should have had the best love of my heart, and I would have fought for him till I dropped.'

'But,' said Palmer gravely, 'you forget he was the Prince of peace!'

'So he was, Palmer: and I think he would have tamed me down into a lamb, as he did you. But did he really die? did they put him to death?'

'They did,' said Palmer, 'as you will hear. And, at another time, Burley, I will tell you more about the wonders connected with his death; for you, I think, will like to hear them. It is the most wonderful part of the whole!'

'What is it, man?' cried Burley eagerly.

'All in good time, my friend,' said Palmer calmly. 'I cannot tell you now; and if I did, it would be a riddle to you. He spoke often to us, however, of his death. "I shall die," he said, "I shall be given up into the hands of sinful men: I shall have many sufferings to undergo, and then I shall be put to death in the most ignominious way, the death of a criminal. But (as many will find) my death will be their deliverance, their life. Yes, some of the very men who will assist at my death will find that I have suffered in their stead, and saved them from the frightful doom which awaited them. They will love me then. Yes, when they find that I died praying for them, and when my Father, at my dying entreaty, has forgiven them, they will be drawn to me then."

'We could not bear this. We never willingly heard him speak of his death. One indeed, a chosen companion, expostulated warmly with him on this point; but with authority and

severity he rebuked that man, and forbade him to speak again on the subject.

'There was a mystery about much that he said to us, which we could not make out. Alas! we were, with scarcely an exception, while he was with us, not only, as it now appears to me, dull of apprehension, but altogether heedless and inattentive to much that he said to us. We were taken up with our own notions about his kingdom, and himself. Ah! how much recurred to many of his followers, with a startling force, when he was gone! He saw our weakness, and ignorance, and he pitied it. "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now," he would say; "when I am gone, I will send one who shall be both an Interpreter and a Comforter to you. He will be your best Teacher, and will guide you to the knowledge of many things which, at present, you would not comprehend. You will then find that what you do not know about me is the most important part of all: MY DEATH IS YOUR LIFE."

'As it happens in every corn-field that weeds spring up in the same furrow with the corn, so it was among the little company who were the chosen friends of the Prince. There was one—only one, however—in that company, who was a hollow-hearted, bad man. His besetting sin was the love of money, which is truly said to be the root of all evil. He was a traitor to the noble Prince; and, tempted by the thought that he should enrich himself by the base and infamous deed which he contemplated, he went to those who were the most bitter and deadly enemies of his Prince, and offered to be their guide to a spot where he was accustomed to resort in his hours of retirement. It was the quiet grove already mentioned. The time he chose was well suited to his deed of darkness: it was in the absence of the people—it was night. Thither they went, led by that traitor, and there they found and seized upon their

victim. He made no resistance, but his calm self-possession did not forsake him; no, nor his kind and loving spirit. He gave himself up into their hands; but before he did so he obtained their consent that the few companions who were with him might be permitted to go their ways unmolested: and, would you credit it?—they all forsook him and fled. At first one of them had come forward with a rash and momentary courage, to defend his Prince, but with a mild authority the gracious Prince commanded him to sheathe his sword; and he, too, forsook his friend.'

'Paltry cowards!' exclaimed Burley; 'give me a friend who will fight by my side, sooner than forsake me in the hour of need.'

'Nobly spoken, my good Burley,' said the old man; 'but the poor fellows were taken by surprise, and panic-struck; they repented bitterly afterwards, I have no doubt.'

'And well they might,' said Burley, 'and shame be to them! Were you there, Palmer?'

'I was not,' he replied; 'but I had the whole account of what took place from an eye-witness; I could not be there.'

'How was that?' said Burley.

'I will explain to you why I could not,' replied Palmer, 'and many other things also afterwards.

'The forsaken Prince was led away by those pitiless and cruel men; and all that night he suffered under their hard treatment. Early in the morning, his enemies met together, and settled their plans, and acted upon them without loss of time. The mockery of a trial was hastily got up; they bribed false witnesses to come forward and give their lying testimony against him; and thus, with a show of justice, he was put upon his trial. He was condemned to die, and that instantly. But before the trial, and while the preparations were making for his execution, they spared no pains to torment and insult him;

they scourged him with whips; they put upon him a purple cloak, by way of ridiculing him for declaring himself to be their Prince, and they knelt to him, as he stood before them in his silent, patient grief, and called him king. Then they took off the cloak, and fell to beating and buffeting him about; they blindfolded him, and made a kind of brutal game of his sufferings, striking him, and asking him to guess which of them it was that struck him; they spat in his face, and still went on striking him. Even when they led him to the place of execution, they forced him to carry the wood of the scaffold on which he was to die; and when they had brought him to the spot, their savage and wicked cruelty still continued. Some of the fellows stripped him of most of his garments, and they shared them among themselves even before his death. Nay, after he was hung up, they continued to cast insults and taunts against him. The scaffold on which they hung him was so contrived, that the poor sufferer was forced to die a lingering death, and as he hung there, the same heartless barbarity was carried on. When he complained of that dreadful thirst which dying men are apt to suffer from, then they held up to his parched lips a cup of some bitter mixture which he could not swallow. And there they stood and looked upon his anguish of spirit, and heaped their mocking insults on him, calling upon him, if he were a king, to come down, and so let them see him assume his power and occupy his throne.

'But all the while, from the moment that he gave himsel up to them, till he died, his firm but gentle courage never forsook him. No prince upon his throne, with all his state about him, ever loooked or spoke with such calm and gracious dignity as he did, when he stood before their judgment seat, and when he was hung up, exposed to open shame. He breathed no complaints, he showed no resentment. He was patient as a lamb in the hands of the slaughterer. He looked

with tender pity upon his murderers, and he was heard to say, almost with his last faint, dying breath, as if in the actual presence of the King his Father, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He knew that his dying wishes would be carried to his Father, and so they were.'

Palmer stopped speaking. 'My story is ended,' he said, and turned away.

There was a pause for some moments: then Burley, who was deep in thought, roused by the silence that succeeded, started up and followed Palmer.

Laying his hand upon the other's arm, he said, 'Stop, my friend, why are you going to leave us? Have you no more to tell us? What does it all mean? Where is this Pshawland, which you have been talking to us about? I seem in a dream; for a thought has come over me that I have heard something of this strange story before, and that it was in my childhood. Did not my poor dear mother tell me something very like this? Ah, dear me,' he added, with a deep sigh, 'how soon a tender mother's words are forgotten! I have forgotten them, I know, all these long years; but I am next to sure that I recollect the last words of your story, when the poor Prince said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Why Palmer, man, they surely are not in the Bible; but wherever they are, I know I love to hear them, or anything that brings back my mother, though I gave her the slip and went off to sea. When I came back, my poor mother was dead. But, kind soul that she was, she left me a message with our next door neighbour, to say she forgave me with all her heart, and left me her blessing, and that she hoped I would pray to God to make me a good and steady man.'

'And did you do what she told you?' said Palmer.

'No, no, man, not I; I loved her, but I soon forgot her dying words.'

'And your mother loved the Bible?' said Palmer.

'Loved her Bible? why to be sure she did.'

'And you loved your mother?'

'Eh, didn't I love her? though I helped to break her heart by having a will of my own, and being as stubborn as a mule, and as sulky as a bear.'

'You would do anything to please her now, I dare say, Burley, wouldn't you?'

'Ay, lad, that I would, but I may wish long enough to see her dear old face.'

'No,' said Palmer, very solemnly, 'you cannot please her for she is I trust far, far away in a better place than this, and she has higher and sweeter pleasures than any she could taste on earth—the pleasures at God's right hand: but though you cannot please her, you can do the next thing to it—you can do the thing that would have pleased her.'

'Well, to be sure I can; and what think you, Palmer, might that be?'

'You can read your Bible?'

'No, that I can't, man.'

'Why not, Burley?'

'Because, my good friend, I can't read. I'm like as father was—no scholar; and I can't do as he did, get my wife to read it to me, for my good little Sally, though an upright, downright, good little body as ever stepped in shoe-leather, can't read any more than I. What's to be done, Palmer?' and he scratched his head in his perplexity.

'I can read it to you,' said Palmer. 'Shall I come and read it to you and your Sally?'

'Shall you? eh: and won't we thank you, man, and won't we listen?'

They were here interrupted by Petit. He came up to Palmer with an expression of bitter contempt on his countenance.

'You are discovered,' he said. 'I, for my part, saw your drift all the time, but I allowed you to go on. I was curious to see what you would make of your old stale story.'

'I don't know what you mean by a stale story, you little bantam-cock,' said Burley; 'but stale or not stale, I call it a good story. Tell a better if you can.'

'As to being discovered,' said Palmer, quietly, 'I may assure you I wished to be so, that is when I had come to the end of my account. I told my story with the desire of showing something of what the great Preacher of the gospel was. The ears and hearts of my companions were closed to the account which God himself has given of the wondrous facts, and it occurred to me that I might gain a hearing, if I put them in the form which I have adopted.'

'What does he say?' said Muggridge, the heavy-looking man, who had only spoken once or twice before, and who with the rest of the party now came up; 'what is he talking about?' and he accompanied his question with an oath, a low, deep curse, rather muttered than spoken out—'Does he take us for fools, or children? What does he mean by trying to cram his nonsense down our throats? but we are not going to swallow it; I for one won't, I can tell him.'

'He takes you neither for fools nor children,' said Palmer, 'but for just what you are, that is, some of you, honest, hard-working men like himself; some of you kind-hearted men, and on many subjects, though not on all, reasonable men.'

'But you have imposed upon us,' he replied.

'There was a poor man, once upon a time, who happened to find out that a villain had entered his neighbour's house, and put poison into the cup he was about to drink from. He could not be an indifferent witness to such an act of wickedness, but he went in also, and without more ado, he threw away the poisoned cup and put another in its place. His

neighbour came in and drank the wholesome draught. After he had drunk it, he found out the truth. In this manner, but in no other, he had certainly been imposed upon. He was about to swallow poison, and another man had given him in its stead a wholesome draught. Was there anything to complain of in such a case of imposition?

'But I have done far more than he did: I have put truth in the place of error and falsehood. As a deceiver I have acted, and yet true If you are angry, my friends, you must be so, I cannot help it. I have succeeded in getting a hearing for my story; and yet how little I have done for that gracious Prince, that lovely and holy Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us!

'But who can speak of that Divine and glorious Being in terms befitting one so great, so good, so altogether lovely? Here on earth we cannot see him in any sense as he is, except in his own word, that wonderful book which you have seldom if ever opened, and which in your pride of heart and self-confidence you despise.'

Petit interrupted him with a loud contemptuous laugh, saying, 'This is all cant, and I for one hate cant.'

'You may call it cant,' said Palmer calmly; 'but let me tell you, there is a cant of infidelity almost as senseless as that of the most degrading superstition. Can you say, with truth, Petit, that, according to your notions of what cant is, you are free from it yourself? You are, dear friends, indeed you are, a set of prejudiced men, so enslaved by your prejudices that you have not had the fairness to judge for yourselves of that volume which professes to be the account of the dealings of God with man.'

'There you are mistaken, my fine fellow,' said Grimshaw; 'we all know what the Bible is.'

'From whence does your knowledge come?' said Palmer.

'Not from the book itself, but from the writings of those who have sought to hold it up to ridicule and abuse. You have read the ribaldry of that poor wretched man, Tom Paine, and of Volney and Voltaire: this I know, for I have seen their works in your hands. You have received the witness of a set of enemies, and I can prove to you how unreasonable and unfair to yourselves you are—how blind to your own best interests. If a man, of whom you think highly, such a man for instance as'—he paused, and, catching the eye of one of the party, who had hitherto been silent, a name occurred to him—'of such a man as Benjamin Franklin, of whom I have often heard you speak, Foxe, in terms of unqualified admiration—if such a man as Franklin had sought you and offered to load you with benefits; and if, when you had been taken prisoner by some dark, wicked tyrant, and condemned to die, that man, that Franklin, had come forward, and taken your place on the scaffold, and had actually given his life to save your life—would you suffer his worst enemies to come and abuse him to you, and make a mock of all the love he had shown to you, and of all the suffering he had endured for you? Would you receive their witness against him? Would you suffer them to tell you that he had not loved you, and cared for you, and died for you? No, no; you would resent such an insult, and feel yourself aggrieved and offended by any word that was spoken against him. But what have you been about with regard to Him who has actually done all that neither Franklin nor any other man on earth has done for you? You could not treat your worst enemy more shamefully than you have treated your best Friend; one who is indeed, as you at last will also know, God as well as man—whom it is madness, therefore, to oppose, even on the bare possibility that he is God, and has the power to strike you dead.'

'Strike me dead!' said Petit, with a scornful laugh.

'Hold, Petit,' said Foxe; 'silence your unruly tongue. Palmer shall be heard.'

'I have little more to say,' said Palmer, 'little more than this—that He of whom I have been speaking is the Prince of peace, and that he has shed his blood for you, and that his life and his death speak alike of his wonderful love. This is what he would have you hear. This he also says to you—"My Father seeks only for willing subjects, and desires to reign in your hearts."'

'I know it all,' said Foxe; 'I have read his life, and I admire his character; it is perfect. If there were nothing else in your Bible, Palmer, I should be a believer—a Christian. But I tell you plainly, my worthy fellow, I cannot hold with the metaphysics of that same Bible of yours. Your doctrines, as you call them—your scheme of religion, is beyond me.'

'I should like to talk to you on the ground of your objections at some other time,' said Palmer, gravely. 'I think you have an honest spirit, if not a humble one.'

'Well, well, any day you please,' replied Foxe. 'I am not a prejudiced man, and I am not too old or too wise to learn.'

Just then the clock in an adjoining factory struck eight. Grimshaw started up.

'My lads,' he said, 'the lecture will begin in half an hour, and I thought we were all to be there to hear this great female reformer, Madame de ——. She is a countrywoman of yours, Graham, and a rare genius, I promise you, as you would say if you had read that work of hers on Republican Morals, which I promised to lend you as soon as Fisher returns it. Come, Graham, what are you waiting for? You, of all men, I thought, would be the first to start for the lecture-room.'

'No,' said the man to whom he spoke, 'I cannot go to-night.'

'Cannot go, man? Why, what's to hinder you?' cried Petit, stopping, and turning round.

'Nothing but my own will,' replied Graham. 'You need not wait to question me and to talk, Petit,' he added, for a rush of words seemed coming from the voluble tongue of the other; 'my answer is soon given, and you need not trouble yourself to hear my reasons. I will not,' he said, mildly but firmly.

'Well, do as you please,' said Petit. 'Your reasons, I suppose, will keep, and may be heard at any time, which is not the case with the lecture.'

They were all gone—all but Palmer and Burley, when Graham rose up and said, 'Will you two come and take your supper with me, Palmer and Burley, at the Angel? I would ask you to my house, but the fact is that I have made it a miserable place by my extravagance; and my poor wife has had hardly the spirit or the temper of late to make me or my friends welcome. But it is my own fault: that is the truth, and a truth soon told. However, we must have a reform there—that is, in the master of the house; and when I begin it in myself, perhaps my poor Kate will return to what she once was. She is a niece of your late wife's, Palmer; and when I married her from your house there was not a happier, pleasanter body for miles round than my poor Kate.'

'It is not yet too late, my friend,' said Palmer, holding out his hand to Graham, which the other took and grasped warmly. 'No, it is not yet too late, but it soon would be. Poor Kate! I always thought she would make a bright woman, and be a credit to any husband, and an ornament to any house. It would have half broken my wife's heart to see Kate a slattern and a scold; but she is, or rather was beginning to be, out of heart about every thing. She will see happier days, I trust, after all.'

'She shall! she shall!' said Graham, his voice shaking with emotion; 'that is, if I can help to make them so.'

'I cannot accept your invitation, my friend,' said Palmer, 'to the Angel; for you know I never enter a public-house except on a journey.'

'Come to my house any time but to-night,' said Burley, 'for my Sally is busy at her ironing-board to-night. She is finishing up a great wash, and I must leave you, for I have promised to turn the mangle for her. But mind your promise, my friend,' he said to Palmer, 'to come and read the Bible, and talk to Sally and me of better things than anything we know at this present time. And now, good night to both of you.'

'I must be alone with you, Palmer,' said Graham, as he took the arm of his companion. 'I must not leave you to-night till you have told me more of this wonderful story. Will you take me to your house or anywhere, and let me hear all that you can tell me?'

'I was going to ask you,' said Palmer, and he pressed the arm of his companion close to his side. 'It makes me happy to find, that by one or two of my associates the account I have given has been heard with an earnest desire to hear more, and to profit by it; and had you not asked me, I should have compelled you to come with me. We shall be quite alone, for my son and daughter are passing a day or two with their aunt at N—.'

They were soon seated by the fireside of Palmer's neat, quiet room. His cottage lay at the outskirts of the town, and commanded a pleasant view of green fields and distant mountains. They sat in silence for some minutes. Graham's eyes were fixed upon the hearth, and once or twice he sighed heavily. He was deep in thought. Palmer did not speak but prayed in silence, and waited for Graham to begin.

'I must first tell you,' said Graham, still without raising his head, 'that though I am a scoffer and an infidel—or rather,

though I was so, for I am not so now—I have been, till to-day, as ignorant as a child of these things. As a child, do I say? No, a child knows more than I do. My little George, who goes to the infant school, knows more. It is all new and strange to me, but it is all grand and beautiful, and my heart is penetrated by the perfect goodness of that noble and tender Being whom you have brought before us in your marvellous story. It is a story of love and of wisdom such as I had never conceived. And this, then, is the gospel of Jesus Christ?'

'No,' replied Palmer, gravely; 'no; this is something like the gospel, but it is not the gospel. I wished you and your companions to hear something of the facts of the history of Jesus Christ, something of his spirit and character. I found it a hopeless thing to get any one of you to listen to the inspired volume itself; you know how often I have tried to do so, and you know also the taunts, the sneers, and the bitter ridicule I have met with. At last I gave up all attempts, but one; I felt that I must no longer speak on the subject—I was forbidden by my blessed Lord to do so.'

'How forbidden?' said Graham; 'you perplex me. You do not mean that you can now hold any communication with one who has been dead so many years?'

'I can, and do hold communication with him,' replied Palmer, with deep reverence of manner, 'and I hope to show you the way in which you also may do the same. He speaks to me now as when he was on earth, and I speak to him as I should have done had I lived at that time.'

'Your words are more and more a mystery,' said Graham; 'how can these things be?'

'He speaks to me,' said Palmer, 'in his word. It is in that finished and perfect record of all which Jesus said and did, that he would have us learn his will concerning us. He has given that word for our continual reference to the end of

time, and he has added no more. We have in it the living transcript of the mind of our ever-living God concerning us. We find everything we can possibly need there. From age to age, and in every nation under heaven, the maxims of wisdom, the lessons and precepts of the written word, have been found suited to every possible case on which we require direction and information, indeed to every variety in the human character; and they have come home to the consciences and the hearts of men with all the freshness and power of a living voice—the voice of a man, but that man the Eternal God. It is in that book he speaks to me, and it is in reply to his invitations to me in that book that I speak to him. Having there learned his will, I ask him to do for me according to his will. Prayer is the way in which I speak to him and seek him; and I am heard, and he answers my prayer; for we are told in his word, "that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him," 1 John v. 14. It was this one way which was left to me when I had seen all other ways fail with yourself and your companions.

'You ask what I meant by saying he had forbidden me to speak any longer to you all on the subject of religion.'

'The very question I was about to put to you,' said Graham.

'I will read you a passage from his word,' replied Palmer, 'and you shall say whether it applied or not.' He took his Bible from his pocket, and turned to the place. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,' Matt. vii. 6.

'They did apply too well to all of us,' said Graham sorrowfully, 'and perhaps to me especially. A dog or a swine could not have treated you more brutally than we have often done. But where is Pshawland? What do you mean by Pshawland?'

'By the name of Pshawland,' he replied, 'I would describe England, France, any country, all countries to which the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has been brought, and where the King of kings and Lord of lords is treated with a cold and contemptuous indifference. The contempt with which his loving claims have been received by you and your companions, Graham, has often pierced me to the heart; and as for the abuse and ridicule which I have met with, I have tried not to feel it as levelled at myself, but to grieve over it with a far deeper sorrow, because I knew that it was really levelled against Christ. Had I not declared myself his follower, had I not gloried in his cross, I should have been treated as a friend. Ah! Graham,' he continued, after a pause, 'I am sure I have no reason to find fault with others, when I recollect what I myself once was. Surely no heart was ever harder than my own. He was despised and rejected of me. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, while I was of Pshawland.'

'And now,' said Graham, 'you love and honour Him whom you once opposed and despised; and you are a happy man. I have often observed the peaceful expression of your countenance, and wondered how it was that you could be so calm and gentle in the midst of a set of fellows like us, while every man's hand was against you. There must be a secret in the possession of these Christian men, I have said to myself, which, for peace sake, it would be well to learn.'

'You are right, Graham,' replied Palmer; 'there is a secret, which you are now in a fair way of possessing. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."'

'His covenant!' said Graham. 'Tell me what you mean. And yet I scarcely know why I ask this, but there is something in your words which affects me strangely.'

'They are God's words, not mine,' said Palmer; 'and I can easily account for the interest you feel in them. He has begun to work in your heart, and when I see you thus meekly attending to the message I bring you, I know that such must be the case. Dear friend, it is written, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way."'

'I will tell you,' said Graham '(why should I hide it longer?) what has most deeply affected me. I must tell you the one part of your account which has entirely overcome me —it is the death of the Prince. I felt, while you were speaking, as if I were standing on the spot—the eye-witness of his dreadful sufferings and of his majestic meekness. I heard every part of your story with admiration, almost with love; but when you set before us the account of his death, my whole heart was moved and melted within me, and feelings as strange as they were strong thrilled through and through my very soul; my cold and stony hardness was gone, and a loving yearning tenderness seemed to draw me towards him.'

'Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' said Palmer, as if thinking aloud, 'the power of God unto salvation.'

Neither of the men spoke for some minutes. Palmer had opened the large Bible which lay on the table near him, and his looks were resting upon its pages. When he did look up, he saw that Graham's eyes were fixed earnestly and inquiringly upon him.

'I am thinking of you while I read,' said Palmer; 'shall I read aloud?'

'Will you do so, my friend?' said Graham; 'I shall thank you from my soul, if you will.'

'I will do so gladly,' replied Palmer; 'and I will first read to you one of the most remarkable chapters in the whole Bible: it is in the ancient Jewish Scriptures, which form part

of our Bible. You are aware, Graham, that the Jews are the bitter enemies of Christianity: that their rulers and the multitude procured the death, and so were the murderers, of Jesus Christ; of that loving, gentle Prince, who came from heaven to earth to set up his throne in the hearts of his people. The first Christians had been Jews, but they were only a small portion of that remarkable people. The great body of the nation refused to receive him—hated and rejected him. Yet they were the keepers of that wonderful book which we call the Old Testament: from their hands we received it; and they are forced by the contents of their own Scriptures to be, as it were, the unwilling witnesses against themselves. There are passages in their Scriptures which describe, with an exactness of detail such as you would say only an eye-witness could have given, the peculiar circumstances attending the death of Jesus Christ—not only the awful event itself, but those minute particulars which seemed to arise at the time, and which no person could have foreseen but one possessing superhuman knowledge; for instance, not only is the fact mentioned that they pierced his hands and his feet, which I need not tell you was the mode of execution by the Roman gibbet, the cross, but one or two circumstances took place which it was quite impossible for any mere human being to have foretold. Yet those circumstances are described with a minute exactness in the Psalms more than a thousand years before they occurred. At the crucifixion of Jesus, the Roman soldiers parted his garments among them; and, it being impossible to divide his woven vesture or tunic, which had no seam, without spoiling it, if they had rent it, they cast lots for it. In this Psalm,' said Palmer, (turning to the passage in his Bible at the 22nd Psalm, and he read it aloud,) 'it is written, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." At the 7th verse of this Psalm David thus

describes also the conduct, and relates the very words, of those cruel mockers who stood by the cross and insulted his dying Lord: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, (that is, in Jehovah,) that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Such was the conduct and such the language actually addressed in mockery to him as he hung upon the cross.

'But here is more especially the chapter I wish to read to you,' continued Palmer; 'and let me mention to you that so remarkably true is the description here given of the death of Jesus, that the assertion has been made by an infidel objector, that this 53rd chapter of Isaiah was craftily inserted in the book of the Prophecies of Isaiah by one who was an eye-witness of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—an assertion which is so absurd, that it contradicts itself; for, had such an attempt been made, would not the Jews, in their bitter enmity to Christ and his followers, have exposed it immediately? But here it is in their own Scriptures, and a Christian teacher found an Ethiopian nobleman reading this very passage soon after the crucifixion of our Lord, at Jerusalem, when he was returning thence to his own country, without an idea that it applied to Christ. It is said, moreover, by a convert to Christianity, who was formerly a Jew, that at the present day the Jewish Rabbis forbid the people to read this chapter of their own Scriptures under the penalty of their severe displeasure. Seven hundred years before the Prince of peace was born into this world, the inspired prophet Isaiah described, with the accuracy of an eye-witness, the character and demeanour of the gentle and suffering Jesus at his death. Hear these wonderful words, my friend,' said Palmer; but before he began to read, with clasped hands and upraised eyes, he lifted up his heart and voice in a prayer so solemn

and so earnest for the teaching and blessing of the Spirit of God upon the reading of his sacred word, that Graham felt himself as if indeed in the very presence of that Being whose very existence he had so long denied. Palmer dwelt particularly on two or three verses of that affecting chapter: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

'You see, my friend,' said Palmer gravely, 'the reception which he met with was foreseen and foretold; the contemptuous indifference, the bitter enmity, with which offers the most gracious, the most loving, were met by the senseless wretches whom he came to save, was no surprise to him. He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. Truly it is added, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

'Here,' said Palmer still more earnestly, 'here is the great *point* of the whole story of the death of Him, who is not only the Prince of peace but the Prince of life. He came not only to live, but he came expressly to die for us men; not only to reign in the hearts, but to die for the souls of his people. This is the grand doctrine involved in his death: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Yes, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," yes, even the chief. It was for this end that he came. Oh! hear the account of his patient sufferings, and with what heavenly meekness he endured the persecution and bitter hatred he met with. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his

mouth." These, my friend, were the sufferings he endured for you; he was wounded for your transgressions, he was bruised for your iniquities; the chastisement of your peace was upon him, and with his stripes you are healed. Is not this a wonderful doctrine—the death of an innocent victim for the guilty and the rebellious—the death of the Prince of life for condemned and perishing sinners?

'What the world saw,' continued Palmer gravely, 'was but the outward form and figure of that stupendous event which then took place. It saw but the death of a martyr, that is, a witness to the doctrines which he preached, and the religion which he introduced: and seeing only this, he was by many despised and rejected, on account of the meanness of the circumstances of his life and death. But when the Lord Jesus died, the whole earth was as it were the platform and the altar on which an innocent and spotless victim, uniting in himself all the weakness of man and all the power of God, offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. He was accepted by his Father and our Father, his God and our God, as the propitiation for our sins. And this book,' he continued, turning to the Bible, 'plainly tells us that this great sacrifice was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of the Godhead before the foundation of the world. Wicked men supposed that they were only acting according to the dictates of their own cruel and revengeful hearts, while they were but fulfilling the purpose of God, as foretold in the Scriptures of truth. And this the apostle Peter tells them when he says: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23; and again in Acts iii. 18: "Those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled;" and in the prayer which is here recorded in this next chapter, the

apostles, in referring to this eternal purpose of God, exclaim: "Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,—for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."'

'All this is wonderful indeed,' said Graham thoughtfully: 'it almost overwhelms me; yet my heart seems opened to receive it. It manifests the wonderful wisdom and power of God, confounding all the vain wisdom and knowledge of man. The grand order and arrangement of the whole scheme carries along with it the internal evidence that it is of God, and announces one glorious truth from the eternal Sovereign and Disposer of all things, that he is love.'

'Yes,' said Palmer, 'you prove that you have been brought to a true conception of the love of God in Christ; but you feel as I do, that it is a love which passeth knowledge; and you also feel that his love to you constrains you to love him. He wins his way to our hearts by love, and we love him because he has first loved us. Does he not reign, dear Graham, in the hearts of his people?'

'I feel a desire that he should in mine,' replied Graham; 'but I must own to you that the mystery of the whole gospel scheme, as I said before, overwhelms me; my will consents to it, I admire it, and love it with my heart; but it is most mysterious; and yet I acknowledge that the doctrine on which you have instructed me, and in which you have found so thankful and so glad a pupil, is only to be explained by the mysterious account which you have given me.'

'It is a mystery,' said Palmer, solemnly. 'Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh. But tell me, Graham, what is there around you and within you that is not a mystery? The body which you bear about with you;

the unseen spirit that pervades its every part; the manner in which the body and the soul are united—the one so intricately interwoven with the other; the speechless soul depending for the utterance of its thoughts upon the organs of the voice; and the voice, which would be but a pipe of inarticulate sounds were it not made by the mind the expressive channel and instrument of its words; the conscience, again, raising its powerful but solitary warning in defiance of the will and the desires and the passions of the inner man. Or, to speak of the world about us and around us, the air we breathe blowing where it listeth, changing in a second of time from the sharp piercing east wind to the soft and genial west; the sun blinding with dazzling light the eye which strives to look upon its glories; the firmament above our heads lighted by its countless stars, and every twinkling star a world or the sun of a world, vast as the region we inhabit. Are not these mysteries perplexing. nay, confounding to your highest powers of thought? Is it, then, too wonderful a fact for you to believe it, that the Being who called these mysteries into existence, and orders and upholds them all, should have devised and executed a plan for the deliverance of his creatures from the misery brought upon them by their own departure from his wise and gentle rule? And what proof more convincing of his exalted wisdom and his condescending love, than to have revealed to us a way at once so grand and so simple that any poor uneducated man may understand it and be made happy by it?'

'I believe that such is the case,' said Graham; 'I see it, and wonder, but I cannot refuse to believe. Alas! I am well read as an infidel, in infidel works. They have been read and re-read till their sentiments had become mine, and I had learned to view everything connected with religion through their eyes. But a new world seems to have opened upon me now that I have learned what the Bible really is. The suffer-

ings and death of that gracious Prince have overcome my heart. Such sorrows and sufferings, and such love, would surely melt a heart of stone. How is it that all this is so new to me?'

'How is it?' replied Palmer; 'how could it be otherwise? How could you know the truth on any subject if you put yourself out of the way of hearing it? That which I was anxious to obtain was a fair hearing; and, though the account I gave was under the disguise of a parable, it has awakened an interest in your heart, and you have received the interpretation of the parable, not in my words, but in those of Holy Scripture. The sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ have, I trust, commended themselves to your conscience in the sight of God.'

'They have indeed,' replied Graham; 'I believe in the efficacy of that sacrifice, and the power of that blood to atone for my sins.'

Palmer did not reply for some minutes. He wondered at the change which had taken place in his companion. He remembered how it had often happened that the sight of a martyr's death had been the means of the conversion of some opposed or careless bystander. 'This has been the case,' he said to himself, 'in the instance before me; but the martyr here is no other than the Lord of martyrs himself. Christ has been evidently set forth crucified before this long-lost one, and his doubts and his unbelief are gone. How true are his words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."'

'What are those words?' said his companion; 'let me hear them again.'

Palmer repeated them; and he added, 'When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.'

'Explain this to me,' said Graham earnestly; 'I have a glimmering of light on the subject, but it is still dark.'

'It is the dawning light,' said Palmer: 'it will increase until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your heart. O Lord!' he exclaimed, raising his eyes, and reverently folding his hands in prayer, 'Thou who hast commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in his heart, and give the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and make it effectual to the conversion of his soul!'—'The explanation you ask,' he added, turning to his companion, 'requires but few words. We have all borne our part in putting Jesus Christ to shame, and bringing him to suffering and to death. He has been lifted up upon the cross; and I appeal to yourself, my friend, whether the contemplation of his sufferings has not drawn you unto him. And why have these sufferings and this death so strongly moved you, but because you feel that a love stronger than death was the moving cause of all that he has endured for you? Thus looking unto Jesus, and beholding him for your sake enduring the cross, despising the shame, that he might reconcile you to God, you begin to have some faint apprehension of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. It is thus with all who begin to understand this wondrous love. Their deep sense of his love kindles in return the love of their hearts towards him. If this is the case even in this fallen world, between man and man, that we love those who love us, how much more must we love Him who hath first loved us, and that with an everlasting love?'

'I do love him,' replied Graham; 'if I know nothing more than this, I now know that I love him. But I must hear more, and know more, in order that I may love him more, and serve him with a devotedness of spirit which can only spring from love. Will you not let me remain still longer with you to-night, and be my teacher in this new way that I have entered?'

'Willingly, gladly,' replied Palmer; 'but one part of my teaching is this, that we must pray together for the presence and the instruction of the great Teacher, that is, the Holy Spirit, who is given to all who pray for him, and he alone can shed abroad the love of God in your heart, as well as guide you into all truth.'

The crimson streaks of morning were beginning to rise above the horizon, and the stars were shining with a pale and failing light, when the friends stood at the door of Palmer's house. They had passed the night in communion with God and with one another, and in consulting the Holy Scriptures. There was a gravity in the look and manner of Graham, which showed how deep was the impression made upon his heart. He was grave even to sadness; but on a remark from his friend, he replied, 'No, I am not sad, but I am beginning to know what happiness is, and I feel that it is a solemn and serious thing. I trust,' he added, grasping the hand of Palmer, 'that I have to-night left Pshawland for ever!'

Palmer smiled. 'Nevertheless you are prepared, I hope,' he replied, 'to go back with me as a missionary to the people of the land. Henceforth, dear friend, we shall be strangers and sojourners there; but if I mistake not, there is another who will soon join our company, a stout heart, and a brave one, whose peculiar character will be of great service in the cause. Good night, or rather good morning, my friend, for the sun is rising upon us, after a night not unlike that which the patriarch Jacob passed at Peniel.'

'Alas! I know not what you allude to,' replied Graham.

'True, my friend,' said Palmer; 'but, blessed be God, you know Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and you will soon be well acquainted with every portion of his word.'

'Blessed, for ever blessed be thy holy name!' said the old

man, as he stood alone at his cottage door and watched the sun rising in unclouded splendour, while the tears fell fast from his eyes; 'blessed be thy holy name, God of all grace, and mercy, and love, that thou hast, I humbly trust, called two of the most resolute and determined opposers of thy gospel, to know and love thy blessed Son!'

THE CRYSTAL SPRING

AND

THE STAGNANT POND.

'HE is a quiet, respectable man, and always seemed to look up to the rector and myself with much deference, and to keep his place, and regard us as his superiors: a rare occurrence, as you know, among all dissenters.'

'Dissenters! you always told me that you were a clergyman in the Anglican church.'

'It is strange,' said the younger priest, 'that I should have to remind you of what our holy church has taught, namely, that all are dissenters who do not belong to her pale.'

'Strange indeed, Alphonso, but I have, till lately, been accustomed to accord to such heretics a title they have no claim to; one did so without thought, and from custom, not many years

back. We have had a pleasant walk,' continued Father Butler, 'and I suppose that is the good farmer's house; it is a fine old place. You did not say too much of this spot; and we shall find our way to it sometimes, I trust, on these summer evenings; and may, perhaps, bring your worthy friend to renounce his errors, as you have done, and seek admission to the true fold. You think,' he added, after a pause, 'that he is a good subject to commence with?'

'Yes, his influence is great in the parish, and he is a serious, thoughtful man. We have a good excuse for our visit in the inquiry we are about to make after one of his labourers; and it is indeed high time to find out what has become of Phil Bryan. He has not been at mass for the last month; and I have heard from some of our people, that he has been seen going into the parish-church of this village.'

'We shall need no excuse,' said the elder priest, as he paused, and, turning his head, he looked up at the sky. 'There is a thunder-storm coming up behind us, which will drive us to seek for shelter in the house of your friend the farmer. Clear and blue as the sky is still over that hanging wood which clothes the rising ground above the farm-house, look how fast the storm is rushing up behind us, meeting the wind; it will catch us now before we reach the house, unless we hasten our steps.'

The labours of the day were ended. Mr. Wakefield turned from his fields and his farmyard, and passing through the little gate which opened into the garden-court in front of the old farmhouse, he stood for a few minutes on the broad gravel walk, looking forth over the beautiful landscape. The rays of the setting sun shot down in broad streams of golden light from behind a mass of gorgeous clouds, which were thrown together in confused heaps as they rolled along. There was

at times a stifling oppression in the breathless air, and then a rush of strong wind passing suddenly, and as suddenly ceasing. He turned to a window of the farmhouse; his wife and daughter were sitting there over their needlework.

'You may save yourself the trouble of watering your flower-beds this evening, my child,' he said to his daughter; 'and you and I, dear mother, must give up our walk to the Haven. We shall have a terrible storm to-night; I am right glad that we got in our hay this morning, only just in time to save it. Still at work; you are very busy, it seems, with your stitching,' he continued, as he stood leaning his arms on the stone sill of the open window, and looking into the room.

His wife turned her face to him, and smiled; but Anne Wakefield had risen, and was folding up her work.

'We have almost done, father,' she said, 'and for once I have finished before my mother; and we were just saying, as we heard the swing of the garden-gate, and saw you coming, that we would go out and join you, and breathe the fresh air this sultry evening.'

'Then you must come at once,' he said, 'or the rain will stop you.'

But as they were leaving the room a flash of lightning startled them all, and a sudden peal of thunder, which followed instantly, told them that the tempest was already near them. Mr. Wakefield hastened into his house, and his wife shut the window; but as she did so, she said,

'There are two persons approaching; let us offer them a shelter before the storm becomes more violent; they are crossing the field beyond the garden.'

Mr. Wakefield hastened to seek them, but before he had reached the porch, the swinging of the garden-gate was heard, and the two priests were seen rapidly approaching, to seek a shelter from the storm that had overtaken them. They were

kindly welcomed; but when they had entered the room, it was with a look of surprise that one of them was greeted, for he was not a stranger there.

'I had hardly expected,' said Mr. Wakefield, gravely, addressing himself to the younger of the two, 'to see you here again, sir.'

'You have not heard, then,' was the reply he received, 'that I have come to reside, at least for the present, at X——. I have been there already about a month, and I and my reverend friend, Father Butler, were on our way to the cottage of one of your labourers, who belongs to our holy church, when we were overtaken by the storm. I find I was not mistaken in telling my companion that I was sure we should receive, not only a shelter, but a welcome beneath your hospitable roof.'

'A shelter, certainly,' replied the honest farmer, and his tone and manner were even graver than before; 'but I am a plain-spoken man, and I cannot add the welcome you have formerly received from us. Your perversion from the truth, sir, has saddened our hearts; for we had hoped better things of you; and I, for my part, cannot say that I am glad to see you here, in your new character. Which of my men, sir, were you about to visit?'

'The man's name,' said the elder of the two priests, 'is Philip Bryan.'

'Poor Philip,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'he came to me for a Bible about half-a-year ago; and he has searched it to such good purpose, that it is now, I think, about a month since he went to our rector, and told him that he should never go to mass again; for he had found that the Romish church and the Bible did not teach the same religion. He has been often with the rector since; and he joins our household, morning and evening, at family prayer. Though you may claim him,

gentlemen, as one of your flock, I can tell you beforehand he will not allow your claim.'

'You think not,' said the elder priest, with a calm, but not a very pleasant smile; 'but we shall at once deem it our duty to seek out our lost sheep, and to judge for ourselves.'

The younger priest was less able to command himself than his companion; he did not smile, but a frown was on his brow, and there was bitterness in his tone.

'The man has been tampered with since he came here,' he exclaimed; 'this cannot be allowed.'

'Pardon me,' replied Mr. Wakefield, 'Philip has not been tampered with by any one. He lodged in the house of an aged man, who has been a labourer on this farm for the last fifty years, an upright man, and one who served God with all his house; that man read the Bible to his wife and grandchildren, and prayed with them. He lay ill for many weeks; and Philip often sat by his bedside when his daily work was over, sometimes passing the whole night there, and persuading the poor old wife to go and lie down in his little chamber, while he took her place beside her dying husband. I never heard what passed between them; but it was after we had both attended the funeral, that Philip walked home from the church with me, and begged me to let him have a Bible, saying, "I have been long ignorant, and at present I have but little knowledge; but this one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see; and this also I know, that I have a right to the holy Bible, for Jesus has said, Search the Scriptures, and I mean to obey his command."'

Just then a vivid flash of lightning startled the whole party; it filled the room with a blaze of fiery light, and was followed at the instant by a terrific and crackling peal of thunder. The storm in its wildest fury seemed to have burst over the house. The conversation was interrupted, and

neither of the priests seemed inclined to return to the subject of Philip Bryan.

'It is an awful storm,' said Father Butler, who was the first to break the pause of silence.

'It is, indeed,' replied Mr. Wakefield; 'and I am glad that my roof is over your heads, and affords you a shelter.'

'Yes,' said Father Butler, 'a shelter from the storm is what we all need, and what we should all desire. This world is a stormy world, and there is but one place of shelter.'

There was another pause; Mr. Wakefield made no reply, offered no observation. He thought he knew what the priest meant, but he had no wish to enter upon any discussion with him. They sat in silence for some minutes longer; the storm continued to rage, and from time to time the flashes of lightning lit up the spacious room, which was now at the intervals filled with a deeper than twilight gloom. At length the younger priest said,

'I have found the shelter, of which Father Butler was speaking; and I wish and pray, my friends, that you may do the same.'

'May I ask, sir,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'to what shelter you allude? But may I first inquire by what name I am to address you? for if I mistake not, I heard your friend call you Alphonso, and your name when you were with us was Davis, the Reverend Thomas Davis.'

'Alphonso is my new name given me at my true baptism,' he replied, 'and I now answer to no other.'

'A fine sounding name, I own, sir,' said the farmer smiling: 'such as I remember when a boy in the books of a circulating library; but Thomas is not a name to be ashamed of. However, sir, I ask your pardon, it can matter very little to me what your name is; only if you wish me to call you Mr. Alphonso, I am glad to know it; for I should, in my ignorance, have said Mr. Davis, whenever I spoke to you.'

'The only shelter,' resumed the younger priest, in a dogmatical tone, not deigning to notice the farmer's remarks, 'is the one true church. There is no other shelter; I know this at last; I have found in the true church that peace which I had in vain sought elsewhere; I do earnestly wish that you, my friends, may find the same shelter and the same peace.'

'Yes, in the true church,' said Mr. Wakefield; 'but not, sir, according to your sense of the words; yet I would rather have said in the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is the head of the church, and the refuge and shelter of his church or people. The church cannot well be called the shelter of itself; but Christ is the shelter of his church, and of every member of his church. It is more in accordance with truth and fact to speak of Christ, and of his church, as they are spoken of in Scripture. But if you speak of the church under the figure of a building, and, as such, a shelter, it must be that church of which he is the chief corner-stone, in whom the whole building is fitly framed together. There is no church which can stand, or afford a shelter in which Christ is not all and in all; he that believeth in him shall not be confounded; but the hail shall sweep away every refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow every other hiding place. I thank God,' continued Mr. Wakefield, 'that we have found all that we need, not in the church, but in the Lord; it was to him that his servant sought, when he said, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is a storm against the wall."* He says, "Thou," that is, the Lord; he does not cry to the members of the body, or to the body itself, but to the head. He is our shelter and our refuge from the storm; and other refuge we have none. "The name of the Lord," it is

* Isaiah xxv. 4.

again written,* "is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."'

Father Butler had been for some minutes standing at the window, seemingly inattentive to the discussion between his companion and the farmer. He now turned abruptly and said,

'I have been watching the clearing away of the storm, and I think we may now venture forth again.'

'You will at least let us offer you some refreshment, after your walk, sir,' said Mrs. Wakefield; 'and dear me,' she added, in a kindly motherly way, 'you look as if you needed something, Mr. Davis; why, you have lost your colour and your flesh, and are but the ghost of your former self. Do take a glass of wine, (you used to like my cowslip wine,) and a slice or two of seed cake. You don't forget how often we sent you one of our seed cakes after you praised them so, in old times,' and the good woman sighed. 'Anne,' she said, turning to her daughter, 'bring some wine and cake for the gentlemen. Well, sir, now I must say that glad as I am to see you, and any old friend, I am very sorry to find you coming back to your old parish as a papist. I am sure I mean no offence to the gentleman who is with you, but you see we are downright English Protestants here, and we always speak our minds; and I know too much of the papists from that famous old book in the best parlour, which you used to turn over and admire, to think well of them. You remember the book, sir,' she added —when the young priest did not answer but by a stare— 'Fox's Book of Martyrs; you told me it was a very fine old copy, and worth a great deal.'

'I remember the book but too well,' he replied; 'and I can tell you this, my good Mrs. Wakefield, that whatever I may have thought of it in my days of ignorance, I have seen good reason to change my mind. I should like to see it behind

* Proverbs xviii. 10.

your kitchen fire, because, to speak plainly, it is a lying book, and therefore a bad book, and it keeps up a wicked slander against the holy Catholic church. Many of your own Protestant party are now ashamed of the book, and well they may be, it is a lying book.'

'That, sir,' said the farmer, 'remains to be proved: and as our rector was saying, only a few days back, that charge never has been proved yet, and for my part, I am sure of this, it does not read like a lying book. I am afraid there is too much truth in it for you, or any popish or half-popish gentleman to like. No wonder such a book is abused. There is another book,' he added, 'to which that famous old volume is but a very humble handmaid, a book which is the greatest treasure we possess; but you would, I suppose, forbid our reading the Bible also.'

'No,' said Father Butler, 'we Catholics respect the Bible as the word of God, and own it to be the greatest authority on earth, and that it is capable of leading a man to all truth, when it is rightly understood.'

'Well, sir,' remarked Mrs. Wakefield, 'I am glad to hear you say so. You see, my dear,' she continued, turning to her husband, 'the Roman Catholics do not forbid the Bible, as we have been told they do.'

'I wish it were not so,' replied her husband; 'but I should like to know how this gentleman would explain what he means by saying *when it is rightly understood.* Will he allow that you and I, my good wife, can read our Bible for ourselves, and understand it?'

'Aye, sir,' said the wife, 'what do you say to that? May I and my husband, according to your religion, read our Bible for ourselves, and can we understand it?'

'The Bible alone,' replied the elder priest, with a mild, bland look, 'the Bible alone, my worthy friends, as it is

understood by every private person, is not a sufficient rule of faith, and therefore cannot lead a man to the kingdom of God. Thank you, my young friend,' he said, as Anne Wakefield now came up to him with her cowslip wine and cake, and stood with the tray in her hand before him; 'I must taste your sparkling wine, but to say the truth, we ought to be on our way back to ——.'

Father Butler hastily swallowed a glass of the cowslip wine, and greeted the pleasing countenance of her who offered it with a smile, saying, as he did so,

'I should like to see your garden, and the beautiful wood above the house, but it is too late and too wet, to do so this evening. We may, perhaps, pay you another visit.'

Anne Wakefield replied, gravely, but kindly, 'My father will, I dare say, be happy to show you the garden, and the wood, sir, at any time; will you not, father?'

'Certainly, certainly,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'whenever the two gentlemen may please to come.'

'And then, perhaps,' said Father Butler, 'we may, I hope we may, come to a better understanding on some points than we seem to have done this evening. There is but one true religion, my dear sir, and every one must try to find it out. This, we are both agreed upon, are we not?'

'I can say, for my part, that I am,' replied the farmer; 'and I have no wish to doubt your sincerity, sir. There is, I am convinced, but one true religion; but I believe, at the same time, that we shall not easily agree as to what that one true religion is. My religion is that of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. Is your religion the same? If, sir, we are agreed on this, we need hold no discussion; if we are not, no discussion would, I trust, bring me over to your mind.'

'Then,' said the priest, 'you decline all discussion. Now

may I not conclude from this, that you are not very certain of the ground on which you are standing? and perhaps a little afraid of a friendly controversy, lest your cause should suffer from it. Your statement, that your religion is that of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, looks fair and sounds well, I allow; but it strikes me you are satisfied to take things for granted too easily.'

'Why,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'whatever God has written for our learning, I do take for granted, but nothing else.'

'But may not God have left on record things for our learning which are not written, as well as those which are in the written word? May there not be an unwritten word?'

'My inquiry,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'is not what God may, or might have done, but what God has done. As to what He has done, or rather written in his Bible, I entertain no doubt. I believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Of the unwritten word, about which you speak, I am not curious to be informed.'

'And do you suppose, my friend,' said the younger priest, 'that I would have given up the faith which you now hold, had I not been convinced of its errors? Would you deny me the common justice of stating my reasons to you, believing you, as I do, to be now in the same error, and quite as capable as I was of being convinced; would you refuse me and my reverend friend a hearing? You do not doubt my sincerity, I am sure.'

'No, sir, I do not doubt your sincerity,' said the farmer, plainly; 'but I may be allowed to say, that I certainly did stand in doubt as to the soundness of even your former views. To tell you the truth, and the plain truth, with all respect, I often thought to myself, when I listened to your sermons at the time that you were the curate of this parish, that they were neither so clear nor so scriptural as I could have wished

them to be. I thought of the trumpet which gives an uncertain sound, but I knew that you were young, and I saw that you were in earnest, though not well up to your subject, nor brought to a clear knowledge of Divine truth, nor thoroughly acquainted with Holy Scripture; and I often wished for some Aquila or Priscilla as of old, to take you unto them as those godly persons did (and they were not ministers) the good Apollos, and expound unto you the way of God more perfectly. I often felt inclined to speak to you on your confused statements of plain scriptural truth, but I did not think myself the proper person to do so.'

'Strange, indeed,' said the young priest, evidently discomposed by the frank declaration of his former hearer; 'that would have been indeed reversing the places of the teacher and the taught.'

'It was the practice, notwithstanding, of the church in the time of the apostles,' said Mr. Wakefield, calmly, 'to try the spirits, and to test the fitness of the teacher. Even when the great apostle Paul preached at Berea, his hearers searched the Scriptures daily, to judge whether the word of the preacher was in accordance with the Scriptures, and they were commended for so doing: as being, therefore, more noble than those who readily received the word he preached, without doing so. This, sir, is our bounden duty, and every minister of the gospel ought to be able to stand this test.'

The two priests made no reply, but departed, seemingly in haste, Mr. Alphonso, as Mrs. Wakefield now called him, having declined, with a somewhat stern look and peremptory manner, to take any refreshment, much to the distress of the good farmer's wife, whose voice they might have heard, as they walked away, bewailing his half-starved appearance, and wondering what had made him lose all the hair on the crown of his head.

There were no thunder clouds in the soft blue sky, but the sun was beginning to descend toward the west in a sea of glory, and the shadows of the two long-coated priests were lengthening to a gigantic height as they turned away from the high-road to a green common on their way to the house of Mr. Wakefield; it was their second visit to Springfell. Scarcely a week had passed since the evening when they had sought a shelter beneath the roof of the worthy farmer; it was in the month of July, and Father Butler, who was somewhat corpulent, felt incommoded by the warmth of the evening: the bead-drops of a profuse perspiration hung round his forehead and trickled down his flushed face, and removing his broad-brimmed hat, he wiped his tonsured head, and begged his companion to moderate his pace.

'The warm weather, and this solid flesh of mine, do not agree vastly well together,' he said, laughing; 'and I shall sit down with your leave and recover my breath under the pleasant shade of this old oak.'

The trunk of another tree, which had been felled in the spring and stripped of its bark, lay stretched upon the fine, short greensward, partly under the shade of its stately and still flourishing companion, and the two priests seated themselves there. The younger of the two was much inferior as to sense and power of intellect, and of a sickly and romantic turn of mind. His course has for some years ceased to be an uncommon one; it has been that of many an amiable, but weak young man. He had been ensnared by certain of the notions of the Tractarian Party, and during a tour on the continent had been captivated by the sensuous fascinations of the Romish Church. His imagination, though not of a very high order, was stronger than his mind. Dim aisles, and ancient cloisters, and stained windows, sweet-smelling incense, and sweet-sounding music, imposing ceremonies, rich and peculiar

garments, all these traps for the senses had caught in him another victim; and so he had been added to those unstable members of the church of England, whose departure from her pale has proved as beneficial to her system, as the casting off of unwholesome humours are to the health and vigour of the bodily frame. Novels and romances had been in his earlier years his favourite kind of reading, and his enervated mind and excited imagination had been thus prepared for another kind of romance, a religion, which substitutes a heap of fanciful and lying legends for the pure, simple, and intelligible Scriptures of divine truth, and, therefore, far more pernicious to the immortal soul, than the trash of the circulating library to the intellectual powers of man.

Mr. Davis, or, as he was now pleased to be called, Father Alphonso, had not found exactly what, in his idle, cloudy imagination, he expected, on his closer acquaintance with those of the Romish clergy he had met with. Some were respectable and well-conducted characters; many of them better informed and far more acute than himself; but they were almost to a man common-place persons, with very little refinement, and not a tinge of romance about them. Father Butler, with whom he was chiefly associated, was a well-meaning man, rather coarse in his manners, and slovenly in his habits; a little too fond, when they were alone together, of a harmless joke, which found no acceptance with the dull solemnity of his companion. But Father Butler was not wanting in common sense, and could not help sometimes smiling to himself at the puerile fancies and romantic notions of the novice, brother Alphonso, who had joined his church. He had no sympathy with his romance, but he thought it as well to humour him by listening, with as much patience as he could command, to remarks which were as mystical as they were tiresome to his matter-of-fact intellect.

'You have brought me by a shorter, but not a pleasanter way to Springfell, this evening,' said the elder priest; 'but the spot has signs of prosperity about it, though not in the garb of corn fields and rich pastures.'

'No,' said his companion, 'but we are on the edge of corn fields and green fields; and not many years ago all around us was such.'

'And now, I perceive,' said Father Butler, 'that a manufacturing population are beginning to establish themselves here. What is that high, huge building?'

'Oh, it is a cotton-mill, Wakefield and Coleman's mill; and those buildings to the left are dyehouses.'

'And the dyehouses, I suppose,' said the elder priest, 'or rather the refuse liquor which flows from them, has given that dark colour to the pond before us—that dirty stagnant pond! When I saw the gleam of water from a distance, I thought I might quench my thirst there, for I could drink like a fish, but I have no inclination for a diluted decoction of indigo, gall-nuts, and other nauseous drugs. Ah, I see now the drain of steaming liquid where it enters the pond; fah! what a scum there is upon the surface! Come, let us walk now;' and he rose up. 'Is there no pure, fresh water to be met with close at hand?'

'Yes, there is, indeed,' said the younger priest. 'Look up to the rocky heights which rise above that wooded hill,' said he, pointing upward toward the spot. 'Can you not see that rill of water gleaming like silver among the foliage? It comes from a crystal spring that gushes forth from the dark rocks above. It finds its way, in a clear streamlet, down the hill-side. It is not far from this spot, though hidden by the green bank opposite. There is the arch of the little hand-bridge which crosses that sparkling streamlet right before you, and you may go down and drink of water so pure and clear that you might count every pebble at the bottom of

it. The farm-house, to which we are going, lies on the other side of the hill which rises between it and the mill.'

'Your friend, the farmer, is, I suppose, one of the owners of the mill.'

'Not he,' said the other, 'but his second son.'

They soon reached the stream, which answered well to the description given of it: and the elder priest went down to the margin, where he managed to raise the water to his lips and quench his thirst; and then to bathe his heated face and temples; and he rejoined his companion, looking much refreshed and talking cheerfully, as they followed the winding path through the wood, at the foot of the hill which led them to Mr. Wakefield's house. They found Anne Wakefield watering her flower-beds in the garden-court before the house; and seated on the two broad garden-seats, which stood there, were Mr. Wakefield and his wife, and another person whom they had not seen on their former visit. He was a gray-haired, elderly man, whose dress, though very plain, and whose whole appearance showed that he belonged to a higher class than that of the friends by whom he was sitting. Mr. Grant, for such was the stranger's name, had been the head of a large mercantile house in London, from which he had long retired. He was a widower, and on the marriage of his niece, who was his nearest relation, with the rector of Springfell, about two years before, he had first become acquainted with Mr. Wakefield. He was a man of large fortune, but simple in his tastes and habits, and the greater part of his income was devoted by him to benevolent objects, not, however, of a merely secular character—for in his enlightened view, the aim of true benevolence was to do everything in his power to benefit the souls as well as the bodies of his fellow creatures. In London he was well known among those, who, like himself, were chiefly occupied in spreading the kingdom of our divine

Redeemer both at home and abroad, and in promoting the best interests of all classes. He knew and he loved the truth as it is in Jesus; and God had given him largeness of heart, and a sound judgment; and though the commercial world, with which he had been long associated, called him an idle man, there was no merchant on Change who laboured so industriously, both with his mind and body, as he did. But his work was of a different character; he laboured much in the Lord. He was an author; and having a clear, as well as a powerful intellect, and having read and studied much, and to good purpose, his books were as distinguished for research as for their simple and lucid style. He had the same high aim at heart in his writings as in his doings. Having been much pleased with the scriptural piety of Mr. Wakefield, and with his simple, honest character, and finding that there were several unoccupied rooms in the fine old farmhouse, he had prevailed on its master to permit him to rent and to furnish three of the rooms for his own occupation. He had determined to pass the autumnal season every year at Springfell, that he might be near his niece, and that he might occupy his leisure at that period of the year with his pen; and there he had now established himself, much to the satisfaction of his niece and her husband, and that of the excellent family under whose roof he was residing. The farmhouse had been in former times the stately mansion of a branch of the C— family; and the Wakefields had been for some generations their tenants. Mr. Wakefield's father had, however, purchased the mansion, and some three hundred acres of the Springfell estate. Not long after Mr. Davis had given up the curacy of Springfell, the old rector had died, and the husband of Mr. Grant's niece had been appointed to the living. The rector and his wife had wished Mr. Grant to take up his abode with them; but he had preferred his own independent ways, having been long

accustomed to pass much of his time alone, and not wishing for the interruption even of those he loved when he was engaged with his writing.

When the two priests walked into the garden-court of Springfell Hall, Mr. Grant was reading aloud from an old volume, to which Mr. Wakefield was listening with a grave countenance; and his wife's attention had also been caught, for she had put aside her work, and sat with her hands crossed upon her lap, and her looks bent on the ground.

'Your book seems to be full of interest,' said the elder priest, as Mr. Wakefield and his wife rose up at his approach; Mr. Grant also rose, closing the book and laying it on the table before him. 'May I ask what you have been reading?' he added, turning to Mr. Grant.

'Certainly, sir,' was the reply he received. 'It is the life of John Wycliffe.'

The priest took up this book, and turning over the pages, seemed to read a few words here and there, as he did so. He laid the book down upon the table, and took up another which lay near it—it was the Bible.

'I fear, my good friends,' he said, smiling, 'that you confine your attention to one side of the question. Would it not be wiser and safer to hear both sides?' he added, gravely. 'It is a question of deep importance, for it involves the salvation of your souls.'

'I trust,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'that we are thoroughly alive to the importance of every question of the kind; we have no wish to take a one-sided view of such subjects, and there can be little danger, if we follow up every stream of opinion to its source, and remembering that there is but one pure, living spring, determine, that if the stream cannot be traced up to that living spring, it cannot be a stream of living water. The Bible, the only book of divine life and inspiration, is that living spring; you, sir, have acknowledged this.'

'I have,' said the priest, 'that it is the written word of God, and of unspeakable value and importance, but it is not the only word of God; there is not only the written word, but there is also the unwritten word of God.'

'Can you prove this, sir?' said Mr. Wakefield.

'Certainly,' answered Father Butler. 'The church has been ever the watchful keeper and guardian of this unwritten word; and that which has been received always, everywhere, and by all, must be the true word of God.'

'There would be better ground for your assertion if such were the fact,' said Mr. Grant, who now spoke, and whose voice had a quiet and impressive tone, which, gentle as it was, seemed to take the priest by surprise. He raised his eyes with a searching look, and fixed them for a moment on the face of the speaker, but as instantly recovered himself, and lowered them again: 'that assertion of always, everywhere, and by all,' said Mr. Grant, 'is boldly and confidently made, and when it is not disproved, it is assumed to be granted; an assertion, however, must be proved in order to become a fact, and your assertion, sir, is not a fact, for it has never been proved: on the contrary, it has been plainly and positively disproved. I could, without much difficulty, bring before you several passages from the writings of those good men who were the successors of the apostles, and whatever the Romish church may hold to have been their sayings as to an unwritten word, it is well known, by those who are really acquainted with their works, what they did say about the written word.' Taking a small manuscript volume from his pocket, he opened it, and said; 'Here is an extract from Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna; "Leaving the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which was delivered to us from the beginning." Here is one from Tertullian, the first Latin father; "If it is not written, let him fear that woe which is destined for those who add to or take from the Scriptures."

Again, this is what Origen, who lived within two hundred years after the death of our Lord, has written:—"To me it seems good to cleave close to God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, so also to his apostles, and to take my information from his divine Scriptures, according to their own tradition." Hippocrates, another of these fathers, who lived in the third century, writes thus:—"There is one God, of whom we have no knowledge but from the Holy Scriptures;" and again he writes: "As many of us as would learn religion, shall not be able to learn it anywhere else, but from the oracles of God; whatsoever, therefore, the divine writings proclaim, let us observe; and whatsoever they teach let us make ourselves acquainted with; and let us believe in the Father, as the Father wills to be believed in; and let us glorify the Son, as He wills that the Son should be glorified; let us receive the Holy Spirit, as He wills that the Holy Spirit should be given; not viewing these things according to our own preconceived prejudices, nor according to our own notions, nor putting a forced construction upon what God has delivered, but according to the form in which He purposed to exhibit the truth by Holy Scriptures, thus let us view it." But I need not read any more of these extracts,' said Mr. Grant, closing his little manuscript book. 'It does not seem to me of such vast importance, as some evidently suppose it to be, whether those men who professed themselves to be the followers of Christ in the early centuries of the church were true to their profession. I take them for what they are worth, neither more nor less. They were not inspired writers, and had they borne no witness of the kind, and left no record such as that which I have given from their writings, they would have proved themselves less worthy of the name they bore than they were; but I bring forward their opinions, simply because it is very plain that whatever other writers in those early days of the Christian

world may have said about tradition, or about the Holy Scriptures, the hackneyed saying of Vincent of Lerins, which you have brought forward, is worthy of no credit, just because it is not true. He has said so, and hundreds have repeated his false words, and made a kind of proverb of them; but the truth, like a ray of strong sunshine upon an icicle, dissolves the hard, cold, substance, and it vanishes at once, and is no more to be seen.

'If you are acquainted with the writings of the fathers, gentlemen,' he continued, addressing himself to the two priests, 'you must be aware, as I for my part certainly am, what strange contradictions, what absurd notions and puerile conceits, abound in the works of many of them; and what a strong internal evidence is afforded by them, as it were, under their own hands, how immeasurably low they fall below the holy and inspired men whom they succeeded; you feel, as it has been truly said, that you have passed from the fields of a celestial region and are treading upon the common earth.

'But after all that can be said about them, how could it be otherwise? They were like all other men—weak, prejudiced, uncertain, and unstable; and when they sat in their quiet cells and chambers, with the inkhorn and the parchment before them, there was no Divine but invisible Spirit present to bring to their remembrance the words which our Lord had spoken; no unseen and heavenly hand to guide the calamus, or pen, with which they wrote, and to inspire into their minds the doctrines and precepts of eternal and immutable truth, even the truth as it is in Jesus. Their works are full of interest to those who have leisure to read them, but there are few who can command that leisure; they may gratify the curiosity of the reader, who desires to know what manner of men they were, but no lover of truth, as it is found pure and genuine in the holy Bible, will rise up from the perusal of

their ponderous volumes without experiencing, on the whole, a feeling of disappointment, and even of weariness and disgust, at much that he will meet with. And when I speak of leisure, let me add, the best use the man who has most time to give to study can make of that time is to devote it to the one book, the book of God's written word. A life is but a short period for the study and consideration of that wonderful revelation of the mind of God; we cannot learn too much of that mind; and how can we know as we ought to know it without a constant, diligent, and unremitting searching into the hid treasures of that one inspired volume?'

Turning to Mr. Wakefield, he added:—'My good friend, I have a word for you on the subject of the fathers. Whatever these gentlemen may say about them, believe me, when I tell you that their works are useless to the general reader; and to the humble, holy, penitent believer, who seeks for the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby, they would prove wearisome and unsatisfactory. "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field, or shall the cold, flowing waters, that come from another place be forsaken? This is the prophet's question, and we can only take it, and adapt it to our own use, by asking whether the soul will quit the living waters of the word of life, to quench its thirst at the high flown language of the Greek fathers, or the acute but unsatisfactory disputations of the Latin."'*

Here Mrs. Wakefield interrupted, by saying that they were about to take tea, and that Mr. Grant had been so good as to say that he would join her tea-table that evening; and she invited the two priests, with much courtesy, to do the same. Her invitation was readily accepted, and the party adjourned to the large hall of the mansion, where a plentiful board was

* See 'Four Sermons,' by the Rev. Chancellor Raikes.

laid out, and where Miss Wakefield, attended by a servant girl, was already occupied in making the tea, and arranging the plates of cakes and fruit upon the table.

'A plentiful repast, indeed,' said the elder priest, as his eyes glanced over the various good things which were spread before him.

'And a hearty welcome, I assure you,' said the honest farmer. 'We cannot agree on points of the highest importance, but I believe you wish us well, gentlemen, though I am more and more convinced that you do not take the right way of proving it.'

'You will allow me to offer you a cup of tea,' said Mrs. Wakefield, addressing herself first to the elder priest who had taken his seat by her side.

'Yes, if you please,' he replied; and then, turning to her husband, he said,

'May I also ask for a glass of the water of that clear spring of which my friend, brother Alphonso, pointed out to me, and which, he tells me, is not far from this house? I drank of the pleasant stream which flows from it as I came hither, and found it delicious, from its freshness and purity.'

'By all means,' said the farmer,

'Go, Liddy,' he added, to the servant girl, who had just brought a bowl of rich cream into the room, 'and fill a pitcher with the water from the spring.'

'I was very thirsty,' continued the priest, 'owing to the heat of the weather and from trying to walk as fast as my young companion, and I longed to drink; but the first water that I saw was that of a stagnant pond, and I must have remained with my thirst unquenched if brother Alphonso had not pointed out to me the fresh and sparkling stream of which I drank.'

The farmer seemed in a thoughtful mood, and did not imme-

diately make any observation, though the priest was addressing himself to him.

'That pond,' he said, at length, 'was not always the stagnant pool it now is. I can remember it, some twenty years ago, almost as clear as the stream of which you drank, sir. We used, then, to water our horses there, and though they troubled the water for a time, they only stirred up the bright sand at the bottom, and it was soon after as transparent as ever. But when I found the horses would not drink of it, I turned the stream in another direction, and it helps to supply our present watering place for the cattle.'

Soon after he had thus spoken, Mr. Wakefield rose up, and left the room. When he returned his wife said,

'Liddy's a long time gone for the pitcher of water; and you have been away almost long enough to go to the spring yourself, dear master. Did you see anything of the girl?'

'I saw her,' said the farmer, 'and sent her on another errand; but she will be soon back.'

'But where has she put the pitcher? Anne, go you and fetch it.'

'Or, wait till tea is over?' said the farmer. 'I trust these gentlemen will take some more of your good cheer, and perhaps they would like a bowl of new milk. The pitcher is in a cool place, mistress, and I'll go and bring it in, in a few minutes, and fill the glass jug in your corner cupboard with the water from the spring, that we may show it to the best advantage. I have a reason,' he added, smiling, 'for asking you to wait, sir, a few minutes, or rather till we rise from the table; I think, too, you will prefer a draught of the water when this evening meal is ended.'

'Certainly,' said the priest, 'a glass of pure fresh water is not only a pleasant but a wholesome draught at the end of a meal. Is it not so, sir?' he added, turning to Mr. Grant.

'As wholesome as it is pleasant, I believe,' said Mr. Grant; 'at least I find it so after breakfast, when I often take a glass of that spring water, and I doubt not, it may be as wholesome after tea.'

When the evening meal was ended, Mr. Wakefield again quitted the room. He returned soon after bearing a tray in his hand, which he placed on a table that stood in the recess of the ancient window.

'Well, master,' said his wife, as he entered, 'I think you might as well have let Liddy bring in that tray for you. Did you tell her to come and clear the table?'

'No,' said Mr. Wakefield, 'the girl will come presently. I told her to wait till you rang the bell for her.'

'But what have you brought, my good man?' said his wife, as she fixed her eyes upon the tray.

There stood upon that tray the glass jug filled with the water from the spring, clear as crystal, with the evening sunbeams sparkling in the pure element; but beside it was a large old-fashioned glass goblet, taken also from the corner cupboard, shaped like a vase, containing almost as much water as the jug, but the water was dark and turbid, and the sun gleamed upon the scum which lay upon the surface, showing a kind of metallic coating with a rainbow-tinted lustre upon it, such as we often see on foul and stagnant water.

'What does all this mean?' said Mr. Grant; and, putting on his spectacles, he went towards the window and bent down his head over the larger goblet. 'Fah!' he cried, 'the stench of this liquor is quite intolerable:—what does this mean? for a meaning there is, I am sure, in your bringing this impure liquid into the room and placing it beside that clear and crystal water.'

'Yes,' said the farmer, gravely, 'there is a meaning, and I hope I shall give no offence by what I say to any one present.

A thought came into my head when you, sir,' looking towards the elder priest, 'spoke of the stagnant pond and of the fresh pure spring, and I fell into a thinking mood, and said to myself, "I will go after the servant girl, and bid her fetch a jug of water from the pond, and after tea is over I will bring the spring water and the pond water in upon the same tray, placed side by side, and ask you, and young Mr. Davis, or I ought to say, Mr. Alphonso, which of the two you would please to drink!" '

'Very strange, I must say,' said the elder priest, 'and, forgive my saying so, most incomprehensible. Think you not so, brother Alphonso?'

'Yes, indeed,' said the younger priest, with a slight sneer; 'a meaning there may be, and I suppose there is, but I own it is beyond me.'

'You have not made your meaning clear, my good friend,' said the elder priest; 'it does not speak for itself.'

'To me,' said the farmer, 'it is plain enough, and you, sir, have made it so; you put it into my head; and the pond water and the spring water of which you were speaking, seemed to me a striking illustration or parable of the subject we were talking of. But before I attempt to explain to you my meaning, will you allow me to ask, from which of these two vessels will you take a draught! There is a tumbler on the tray; may I offer you the spring water or the pond water?'

'This is all nonsense,' said the priest, and a dark frown was on his brow; but he quickly restrained himself, and said with a laugh, 'Well, well, never mind the water, let us hear the meaning of this piece of wit. Throw a little light upon the matter, if you please; for it is very dense, or I am so.'

'The word of God,' said Mr. Wakefield, gravely, 'abounds with types and figures, similitudes which it has pleased Him, who is the fountain of wisdom, to employ for our instruction

in spiritual things. I find a similitude in this vessel of spring water—which is as clear as crystal, and which is sweet and pure, and refreshing to the thirsty—to the pure and refreshing doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. They, indeed, are like the waters of a living spring, so that there is no truth nor doctrine, as our fine old homily declares, necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that it is or may be drawn out of that fountain or well of truth. Therefore, as many as be desirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God, must apply their minds to know Holy Scripture, without which they cannot know God and his holy will, nor their own duty. Then, again, it is there said, for I know the passages by heart, I have read them over so often :—"Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the Old and New Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by men's imagination for our justification and salvation." This is my meaning. There, sir, in that vessel of living water from the crystal spring, is the type of the water of life, drawn from the Holy Bible; and there, sir, in that stinking puddle taken from the stagnant pond, is the type of men's traditions. I should think it strange, with those two vessels before you, if either you or Mr. Alphonso, were to prefer to drink of that stagnant water; but, impure and stagnant as it is, I do not scruple to say, that I would rather swallow the whole contents of that vessel, stinking and almost poisonous as I should find it to this bodily frame of mine, than I would receive into my soul any traditions of men, which the church of Rome would substitute for the Scriptures of God, and so forsake the well of living waters. I believe, from my heart, that all such traditions, all teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (to use our blessed Lord's own words) are destructive to the soul of man. No, nor do I want any mixture of error with the perfect purity of

Divine truth; not one drop of the stagnant puddle to taint the water of the crystal spring. Would you, sir, think this pure water improved, if I were to pour a drop from this filthy liquor into it?'

'Your meaning is at least clear enough,' said Mr. Grant; 'and I must be allowed to say that your illustration is as true as your meaning is clear. I thank you for it, and I shall not forget it; nor,' he added, mildly, 'will these gentlemen forget it. They may not agree to what you have said, but they will not easily forget your parable and its explanation. You and I, Mr. Wakefield, are but two humble laymen, and these gentlemen are priests, so they ought to be better fitted than we are to speak on the subject of religion; and we are bound —that is, if they can prove themselves right, and us wrong— to bow to their decision; but I fear that what our Lord said with reference to the Jewish church in his days, applies with equal force to the Romish church in ours:—"Ye have made the word of God of none effect by your traditions." While he thus condemned the traditions of men, he commanded his disciples to "search the Scriptures;" and thus the apostle Paul, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, as the oracle of God, declares that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"—and the word Scripture, as we are all aware, means not an *unwritten word*, but that which is *written*—namely, the Holy Scripture of God, which is thus declared to be complete in itself. We have no other word of God, and we need no other word. A tradition, or that which is handed down from man to man through successive generations—a tradition assuming to be the very word of God may be called the unwritten word, but it is, notwithstanding, only a tradition; there may be other traditions, which I am aware, are entitled the unwritten

word; still I would ask you, what is this unwritten word? what does it pretend to supply in the place of that which is wanted in the written word; or rather, will you tell me what is wanting, and, therefore, needs to have the blank filled up in the written word? The divine Author of the Holy Scriptures does himself pronounce his word to be complete and perfect, nay, it is written there, "Add not to his word, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar."* Those inspired words seem to stand forth from the sacred page to rebuke the daring, and, I might say, profane spirit that would presume to put one word of man side by side with the word of God.'

'But you came too fast to your conclusion, my good sir,' said Father Butler. 'You assume that what we would add is the word of man: now we declare, on the other hand, that it is not the word of man, but of God, only that it is his unwritten word.'

'I do not ask you how you can prove this,' said Mr. Grant, 'because I well know that your reply would be,—the church affirms it; and I also well know how vague and unsatisfactory your description of that word church is, and how convenient such an assertion has been found in settling every question, and silencing every argument; but if I had no other evidence to bring forward to prove the insufficiency of all that can be said about the unwritten word, this one would be and ought to be conclusive; it is what you, my good friend,' he continued, looking round to Mr. Wakefield, 'were remarking to me not long ago, that if this unwritten word agrees with the written word, it is worthy of all belief and acceptance, for it only tends to confirm what is already written for our learning; but if it adds anything, or in any way alters it, or sets forth some doctrine which is contrary to any point of doctrine in Holy

* Prov. xxx. 6.

Scripture, we are compelled, if we are faithful to the truth, not to believe or receive it.'

'But,' said Father Butler, 'we have the testimony of the church to the authentic character of this unwritten word.'

'And yet what you call the church,' said Mr. Grant, 'is but a body of uninspired men who have presumed to set forth, as the mind of God, the traditions of men, which are at variance with that book, which you as well as we are agreed is certainly the word of God.'

'Still,' said Father Butler, 'if the written word refers directly to such traditions, and tells you to receive them, how could you justify your refusal to do so?'

'The written word,' said Mr. Grant, 'cannot, or I should rather say does not, require me to receive a doctrine or statement on any point which contradicts its own language on that point. I know that the church of Rome does this; but I know that the written word does nothing of the sort. And thus it is that your church displays its unscriptural character. It directs me to receive many a tradition which contradicts or alters some part of that written word; I can come, therefore, to no other conclusion than this, that such a tradition is of man, and a forgery of men and not of God; for his truth and my own sense both tell me that he would not have given a tradition to any man, to whom he has given his written word, which would direct the man to substitute that tradition in the place of any passage of the written word, and so in fact cancel and expunge the divinely accredited passage; because, if the tradition be right, then the written word must be wrong; if the tradition be of God, then the written word cannot be of God; and those who maintain that it is of God, do in this manner virtually declare, at the same time, that it is not of God.

'I am convinced,' he continued, 'that we cannot be too

careful, or too jealous, as to the admission of any traditions of any church into the sacred canon. We have an instance, at the close of the Gospel according to St. John, of the misrepresentations of the truth, by a tradition commonly current in the very time of the inspired writers of the New Testament. We are told that Peter had been inquiring of our Lord what should be the future course of his fellow disciple, John, and that our Lord had replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" On these words the apostle remarks: "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die." He adds, "Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" In other words, he tells us that a certain tradition had gone abroad, and had been circulated among the brethren, and that that tradition was an alteration of our Lord's words, and an assertion that he had said what he did not say. There was then an inspired apostle to set the matter right, and to inform us what our Lord did say. But though since the death of St. John, the last surviving apostle, we have no inspired man to do this, we have the Scriptures of truth, by which we are commanded to try, as by a test, every tradition, and every word of doctrine set forth by man; and by those sacred Scriptures they must stand or fall.

'That passage from St. John's Gospel is one of deep importance as bearing upon the subject of traditions; it proves to us that the divine Author of Holy Scripture foresaw the fatal consequences of committing his word to the keeping of infirm and fallible men, except as written down by those men whom he had inspired and appointed to record it. The brethren, who were doubtless the apostles themselves, had, before they were inspired by the Spirit of truth, sent abroad that incorrect tradition; and their having done so, was in itself a proof how liable the best men are to err; how treacherous the memory

may prove if we trust to that alone. That tradition was said by the brethren to be the record of the words of Jesus, but it was not so. We cannot, therefore, depend upon the traditions of even the best and holiest men; for all men have erred. And there is no reason why we should do so, when we have a written word, of which, I repeat, it is recorded by the inspired apostle Paul, "That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.'* Of this word it is also written by Peter, that "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." '†

'You speak very confidently of the written word,' said the elder priest, with a slight expression of scornful bitterness in his tone: 'but how would you, or any one, know that this written word were the true and inspired word, had it not been for the testimony of the church which has preserved it, and certified as to its genuineness? I suppose you will at least allow that the church has been the conservator, or keeper, of the Scriptures, and the witness to their truth.'

'God has made the church the keeper and the guardian of the Scriptures,' said Mr. Grant, 'and a witness to their truth; but I do not say this merely of the Romish church; for God did not send his word to enlighten the world, in order that a body of men should combine together to bury it under heaps of rubbish, or to keep it covered up, as in a dark lantern. "Men do not light a candle," said our blessed Lord, "to put it under a bushel, or under a bed, but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all them that are in the house." This, sir, is what your church has long done, and would still do, if

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † 2 Peter i. 21.

it were in their power; and here let me add,' continued Mr. Grant, 'that it has often astonished me to find that the Romanists, in their disputes about the word of God, are so ready to start difficulties as to the evidence of the truth of the Holy Bible. They do, in a manner, dare their antagonists, whether learned or ignorant, to prove the evidence for the truth of the book. "The Protestant must know," says the Romanist, "that the book which he holds in his hand is the real and true Bible." Now this no Protestant can know, by his own private judgment, because the Bible is nothing but a book, a dead letter, and cannot give evidence to itself; and then they will proceed to throw doubts before the mind of the unlearned Protestant, in order to exalt their own body.

'This is, alas! a common way with the church to which you belong, sir'—and he spoke with a gravity which was impressive from its solemn calmness. 'I have been often shocked and astonished to find that you thus challenge the Protestants, or, I would rather say, the readers of Holy Scripture, to prove the truth of the inspired word. You do, in a manner, cast a doubt upon its authenticity, in order that you may place it on the same ground as your own traditions: and that ground is a quicksand! When told that we receive the written word, and that alone, as the word of God, you and your church instantly exclaim, as you yourself have just done, that we must know that this book which we hold to be the Bible, is the real and true Bible, and that the Bible cannot give evidence to itself! This assertion we meet at once with a decided denial. We assert, that whatever may be other evidences and proofs to the truth and genuineness of the Bible, the first and strongest evidence of all is that which it does itself give to its truth. Like sunlight, which, when we see it, bears with it its own evidence that it is of the sun, so there is what we may well call Bible-light, bearing with it its

own evidence. As the entrance of the sunlight into the world giveth light to the eyes of the outward man, so the entrance of the word into the heart gives light to the understanding of the inward man; or, as it is written, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."*

'But we who are now conversing together,' he added, 'profess to be believers in the written word, and therefore there need be no further discussion of this point, whether the Bible is true and authentic, or not. If we Protestants did not receive the Bible, it might be necessary to open the question; but as we do, it cannot. At all times, except to infidels who reject the Bible, it seems in truth a work of supererogation to combat an objection where none exists; but, I repeat, it is plain enough why you do this; you wish to compel us to acknowledge that, if we receive the Bible as authentic, we can only receive it from your church as having been its keeper. Now this we cannot allow. We receive the Old Testament from the Jews, and the New Testament from the early Christian church. As to your church, as it now is, we deny it to be the same as the church of the apostles. It assumed its present settled form at a very late date,—that of the council of Trent—at which period all the successive errors, which, from time to time, had been introduced into the church of Rome, were collected together, examined, and solemnly approved, and then incorporated together in one compact mass, and the stamp of infallibility was solemnly impressed upon them all.

'So far from receiving the Bible from the church of Rome as it now is, why, it is because we cannot, and do not, receive it from your church that we have left Rome, and protest against it. Had the Romish church fulfilled the office which it proudly claims, of being a faithful expositor of Holy

* Psalm cxix. 130.

Scripture, we should not object to its being regarded as a branch of the true church; but, because it has corrupted and perverted the Scriptures, we have separated and come out from it.'

'And yet,' said Father Butler, 'it is the command of Scripture, or rather of Christ Jesus himself in the Scripture, to every one of us, to hear the church.'

'Allow me to say,' exclaimed Mr. Grant, 'that the passage of Scripture in the 18th of Matthew, to which you refer, has nothing to do with the question before us. Our blessed Lord, whose words you have strangely misapplied, gave no such command as you affirm he did, when he spoke those words: the church of Rome has certainly wrested these words to serve its own purpose; separating the text from the context, and then giving that text a wrong meaning; for the right meaning is evident enough to any one who will read the whole passage. The words, as spoken by our Lord, have no reference to points of doctrine, or to the common faith of the church of Christ. Our Lord is speaking of the offence given by one private individual to another, and laying down an admirable rule to be observed on any such occasion. He directs the offended person first to resort to private entreaty; and if he should then fail to gain his brother, and he will not hear him, then he desires him to confer with him in the presence of two or three witnesses. He then adds, "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Our Lord is here speaking of the congregation, not the ministers of the church. What can such a passage as this have to do with their authority in matters of faith? He exalts them to no such office, he invests them with no such authority; he does not say, for instance—"You must not hold an opinion of your own on any passage of Scripture, exercising your own

sense and judgment after comparing Scripture with Scripture, and humbly praying for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. But you must hear the church; and the church will give you the true sense of the passage in question: and if you refuse to hear the church, you must be regarded as a heathen man and a publican." Pardon my saying so, but I must conclude, in common justice to your own candour, that your perversion of that plain Scripture can only proceed from your neglect to read the Scriptures. You yourself have taken for granted that your church has given the right view of the passage, without examining and considering it yourself.'

'I do not at least presume,' said Father Butler, 'to set up my own private judgment in opposition to the decision of the church on that Scripture.'

'The church, or rather your church, is readily brought forward, I grieve to say,' replied Mr. Grant, 'to authorize any perversion, and any corruption of the sacred text, which militates against your system, and to silence every objector; but you must remember, sir, that, though you may thus stop the mouths, and answer the objections of your own unlearned but inquiring members, the members of our church are not denied the right—a right which no man, or body of men, may take from us—of possessing and reading the Bible for ourselves: and we are not to be silenced by that hackneyed cry, that "parrot cry," The church, the church—hear the church. The sense, given by yourself and your brethren of the Romish persuasion, to that passage of the Bible is, I do not hesitate to assert, a distorted and most unfair sense, and cannot be maintained. It reminds me of a passage in the Old Testament, which you will find in the book of the prophet Jeremiah,* in which the Jews are sternly reproved by the Lord God for a like assumption and a like cry. "The temple

* Jer. vii. 4.

of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."

'Why, sir, I have known many a poor ignorant Romanist, aye, and many an intelligent and educated member of your church, alarmed and almost terrified by those astounding words, The church. They have met him at every turn, stopped him in every remonstrance, forbidden him to entertain a single doubt, or to follow up a single conviction; and I have prayed that the Lord would graciously open the eyes of the man to enable him to look the bugbear full in the face, and to assert his right to have the Scriptures, and to obey the command of the Great Head of the true church, and search them. I cannot see on what authority, but a most groundless one, your church has dared to forbid the Bible to any man or woman whatever, in defiance of the commendation of the great and inspired apostle Paul, which he pronounces on the youthful Timotheus, because from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures—adding, that they were able to make him "wise unto salvation." It was not under the teaching of the church, but of that of his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois, that he was taught to know, and love, and obey the Holy Scriptures. But the church of Rome, in the very face of the plainest statements of Scriptures, passes over such facts, and persists in its perversion of the truth. No wonder that it forbids the Bible, and keeps it from the hands of the people. The clergy of the church of Rome first of all did themselves neglect the Scriptures, and then forbade the neglected book to the people. This had not been the case with the fathers of the early Christian church, the successors of the inspired apostles for many generations. It was reserved for the church of Rome, according to its new creed, to oppose itself to the voice of antiquity, and as a body to forbid the word of God to the people.'

'I do not understand what you mean by calling the creed

of the church a new creed,' said Father Butler; 'and as for the voice of antiquity, I thought it was agreed upon by all parties that we have antiquity at least on our side.'

'I spoke advisedly, when I said a new creed,' replied Mr. Grant; 'for even the Articles of the church of England are of more ancient date than the creed which the church of Rome has presumed to engraft on the ancient confession of the faith of Christ's people—the Nicene creed. There is just this difference between the church of England and the church of Rome: that while the former church in the reign of Edward the Sixth, who came to the throne in the year 1547, reformed herself, putting away the unscriptural and monstrous errors which corrupted the faith once delivered to the saints, the church of Rome, in the year 1564, consolidated into one mass all those monstrous errors, and incorporated them into her system, and then pronounced them to be her infallible creed.'

'You speak, of course, of the Council of Trent,' said Father Butler; 'but you will pardon me for setting you right as to your dates. That council assembled in the year 1546, before Edward the Sixth began his reign.'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Grant, 'and the reformation of our church began, as you must be aware, in the previous reign, when Henry the Eighth threw off the supremacy of the Pope in the year 1533; but I repeat what I said as to the decision of the Council of Trent in the year 1564. It was in the month of December, I am particular and accurate as to dates, in the year 1564, *for the first time that the creed of Pope Pius the Fourth was added to the ancient confession of faith*, and issued and received by the universal church of Rome, as the explicit and accurate summary of her faith in every part of the world. At the former meetings of that council, the Nicene creed had been repeated aloud, and proclaimed with acclamation, as the creed of the church of Rome. Up to that year, 1564, the various

doctrines and dogmas of men, which have no place in the Bible, and are, in fact, contrary to the Bible, but which had been brought into the church from time to time, lay there like accumulations of rubbish choking and corrupting the water of life; but they had never been formed into a system, and as a system accredited and proclaimed with authority as the creed of the church, and stamped with the infallibility claimed by the Romish church—and let me say again, sir, that this is not a mere matter of opinion, but of facts, and of history, and of dates—therefore I maintain that your creed, in all that it differs from ours, is *a new creed, and of more recent date than the creed of the church of England, and of the other reformed churches of Europe, which have adhered to the Nicene Creed, and the Apostles' Creed* not merely because they are the expositions of the ancient creed of the church, but because they are plain and intelligible expositions of the doctrines and statements of the Holy Bible. I may, therefore, take up Mr. Wakefield's parable, and liken the church to a pool or reservoir, supplied, during the time of the apostles, with living waters from the crystal spring. There was no other church in those days; and then it was pure, and kept pure and uncorrupted. The apostle Paul sternly denounced and repudiated the admission of the dogmas and traditions of men into the church. In various passages of his epistles, speaking as he was inspired of God, he has forewarned the faithful followers of Christ, the members of the true church, of many of those unscriptural errors which were afterwards brought into the church. He was enabled, by the spirit of prophecy, to foresee them; and empowered by the spirit of a sound mind, and of apostolic authority, sharply to rebuke and condemn them. "I know this," he said, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after

them."* Thus to the church at Colosse, he writes: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."† And he adds, in the same chapter: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Of these errors and corruptions, and like things, he says, "which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body." Surely this is a plain description of some of the flagrant corruptions of the church of Rome. In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, at the second chapter, he describes in a few bold plain outlines the great apostasy from the truth which has since arisen in the church; nay, he there declares, that the "mystery of iniquity" did already work. It is an awful passage of Holy Scripture; and you would do well, sir, you and your companion, if you were to study it, with earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit, that you might receive nothing but the truth, and "the love of the truth," and be delivered from "strong delusion, and the belief of a lie."

'It matters little whether we are called Catholics or Protestants; but it is of deep and vital importance that we should be faithful to the word of God, which is written for our learning, and about the authenticity of which there can be no doubt. I would earnestly entreat you, therefore, to consider how you will be able, at the great day when we must every man give an account of ourselves to God, to clear yourself from the charge of having held views and practices, and taught them, contrary to that word! And surely, if what we both call the written word sets forth some great truth, while that which you call the unwritten word, or the church, opposes or denies that truth, then both cannot be right; and your unwritten word, and your church, must be wrong.

* Acts xx. 29, 30. † Colos. ii. 8.

'Were the church of Rome what the church of God was in the time of the apostles, there would have been no need of a reformation, and no excuse for protesting against her. But Mr. Wakefield's parable is a striking illustration of the fact. Some twenty years ago, that now stagnant pond of which he spoke was the reservoir of the waters of the living spring, and he might have drunk thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle. It is now corrupted and defiled; and neither man nor cattle can drink of its waters. It is much the same with the church of Rome. Even in the time of the apostles, false teachers arose, endeavouring to introduce into the church various corruptions of the faith; and Jude exhorts the true followers of our Lord "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints;" while John complains of a Diotrephes loving to have the pre-eminence, and casting the brethren out of the church, and writes, that even then there were many anti-Christs. The records of the early church, after the times of the apostles, have spoken of many heresies. For a time most of them, indeed, were withstood and repudiated by the greater number of those who professed to follow Christ; but at length the greater number embraced error, and the lesser number condemned and protested against it.

'Thus, in the 4th century, the worship of the mortal remains and other relics of departed saints was formally introduced into the church—a corrupting superstition, borrowed, it is well known, as many others were, from the pagans. In the year 606, the decree was issued constituting the bishop of Rome the perpetual head of the universal church. The 8th century witnessed the worship of the images of Mary the mother of our Lord, and of the saints, as an established ordinance of the church of Rome; then came, in the 11th century, the infallibility of the church, and the compulsory celibacy of the clergy, a doctrine only less corrupt than the

unscriptural enormity of auricular confession, which followed in the 13th century; then came, in that same century, the blasphemous figment of transubstantiation—afterwards the sale of indulgences brought in new and most flagrant corruption, and became an open scandal.

'I speak of all these things briefly—but I challenge you to prove that any of them are to be found commanded or set forth in the Holy Scriptures. On every point in which Rome agrees with the Bible we would agree with Rome; but on every point in which Rome does not agree with the Bible we differ from Rome, and protest against Rome; and as Rome will not consent to give up her unscriptural dogmas, but persists in embracing and upholding them, therefore we will not submit to Rome, or hold any fellowship with her errors. We prefer Holy Scripture, which cannot err, to Romish teachers, who do. We prefer the *crystal spring* to the *stagnant pond.*

'The church of Rome has become the receptacle for all those unscriptural and defiling elements, which, mingling with the pure stream that once flowed into it, have fouled and polluted the whole, and made it what it now is—an apostate, unscriptural, and corrupted church. The waters of life are there, but so mixed up with those various pollutions that their limpid purity and healing influence are gone. If your church would consent to cleanse itself of all such filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to cast out its corruptions, and become the reservoir of the waters of life only, then we should gladly acknowledge her.

'But this cannot be; the council of Trent has put all reform and all purification out of question. The church of Rome is in sad truth but a stagnant pond; and every church on earth throughout which the Holy Scriptures, like living streams from the deep well-spring of truth, do not flow and circulate, pervading and purifying every part with the freshness of divine life, is but a *stagnant pond.*'

'It is useless attempting to do anything with those heretics,' said Father Butler, as the two priests proceeded on their way back to the city of X——. He was walking on before his companion; and though his words might seem to be addressed to him, he was rather speaking to himself: 'Whenever that Bible has got hold of a man, we may give up the attempt to turn him to the true church. Why, where are we?' he asked, turning round: 'I suppose you know.'

'Not I!' replied the younger priest; 'you led the way, and hurried on at so great a rate that I had a mind to let you take your own way; and it is easier, as I know of old, to get into this wood than to find one's way out; there are so many crossing paths.'

'Well, lead the way,' said Father Butler, 'and do your best to take the right path; I will follow.'

The path which they now entered soon opened upon a little glade, whose masses of rock lay scattered about upon the soft, fresh greensward, with here and there a tall and graceful birch, rearing its silver shaft, and dipping its light and weeping branches, all sparkling with dew-drops, into a gurgling stream. There was no other sound to break the sweet quietness of the spot, till, as they walked on, a ringdove, startled by the sound of their voices, rose suddenly on the wing at a short distance from them, and, mounting into the air, floated away with a calm but rapid flight.

'We are at the spring-head,' said the younger priest, 'and we must turn back, for the path goes no further; it is stopped by the wall of rock which is before us.'

'It is a lovely spot,' said Father Butler, 'and I am not sorry to have come to this same crystal spring, as they call it, about which so much has been said. What a delightful coolness is spread about the place; and truly the little fountain which gushes from the rock is like a shower of diamonds, as it

drops, sparkling in this dull twilight, into the rocky basin beneath it. There is an iron ladle and a cup fastened by a chain to the rock. Thanks to the spirit of kindness which placed them there! I must taste and drink of these sweet waters. Will you not do the same?'

'No,' said his companion, 'I am not thirsty: and I hope you will be quick, for it will soon be dark, and then we may wander here for hours.'

'First let me read this inscription, my young friend,' said the elder priest.

He read the words, made no remark, and in silence they quitted the spot. The words were these—'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.'

'Well, have you found the right way yet?' said Father Butler, as his companion turned into one at right angles from the path in which they were with quickened steps.

'I know not,' said the other, 'but I caught a light in that direction, and lost it, and now I see it again through the opening branches. It is shining from the window of that cottage.'

'Stop, then, and ask your way.'

'There is no occasion,' he replied; 'I know it now.'

'Yet stop,' said Father Butler, as they were passing the cottage in the wood, 'I know that voice.'

They stopped and listened. In the hushed silence of that sequestered spot, and that quiet hour, a deep but clear voice was heard reading aloud with solemn earnestness—'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and

eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.'*

The two priests drew nearer, and Father Butler stretched forward his head, and looked in through the casement. A man in a labourer's dress was sitting near the window, and the light of the single candle fell upon a large Bible which lay open on the table before him. On the opposite side, with her eyes raised to the face of the speaker, sat an aged woman, listening with rapt attention to the sacred words.

'It is no other than Phil Bryan,' said the elder priest, as he drew back his head, and whispered in the ear of his companion.

'Shall we go in?' said the younger priest.

'No,' replied Father Butler, 'it is getting late, and it would be useless, as I said before. When once they take to reading their Bible in downright earnest, and get it so by heart that they have answers ready to everything that can be said, we must give them up. Let him alone. It is but waste of breath to reason with such obstinate heretics. They will not hear the church; and at present, in this country, we have no power to punish them. But the time will come, I trust, when we shall be able to deal with all such offenders as they deserve.'

'St. Dominick grant that it may,' said the younger priest, as they turned away.

* Isa. lv. 1—3.

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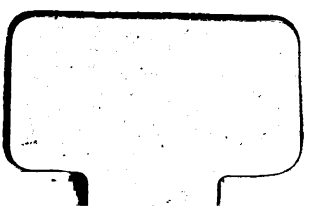

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